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Cooper, Nicola Keppel

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**Street-Level Bureaucrats and Agri-Environmental
Schemes: The Case of the FRCA Project Officer
Implementing ESA Schemes in England and Wales**

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**A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.**

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Abstract

As interest in implementation deficits has been revived in recent years, this thesis examines the role and influence that local-level implementers have on the policy implementation process. The thesis focuses on the implementation of agri-environmental policy in England and Wales where, to date, limited research has analysed the role and influence that the agri-environmental implementer has on the implementation and outcome of individual agri-environmental schemes. As part of this analysis, the thesis seeks to further theoretical and conceptual understandings of policy implementation by analysing whether a 'universal' theory of local-level implementers can provide a holistic understanding of any one policy implementer. The theory tested is Michael Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy.

Adopting an actor-network methodology, the research examines the relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer in two specific agri-environmental schemes - the Breckland ESA and the Cotswold Hills ESA. Interviews are conducted with actors identified to be involved in the implementation of the individual schemes. These include the agri-environmental implementer - otherwise known as the FRCA project officer - farmers, agricultural officials and environmental advisors. A postal questionnaire sent to FRCA project officers operating in England and Wales provides further empirical evidence to support the analysis conducted in the two ESAs.

Analysing the empirical material it is evident that the FRCA project officer is a relatively important and influential actor in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes. Operating at the interface of a number of individual actor-networks, the project officer is, for many actors, the gateway through which their personal agri-environmental objectives may be implemented in the locality. Drawing upon the empirical evidence collected in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, the thesis goes on to confirm that, theoretically, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy provides a limited understanding of the agri-environmental implementer. Further, it is asserted that in future studies of specific local-level implementers, the application of an actor-network approach may provide a more holistic understanding of the relative influence that local-level implementers have in the policy implementation process.

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Abbreviations

ADAS	Agricultural Development and Advisory Service
AEP	Agri-Environmental Policy
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
APO	Assistant Project Officer
BASC	British Association for Shooting and Conservation
BCP	Brecks Countryside Project
BGMCS	Broads Grazing Marshes Conservation Scheme
BTCV	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
CAECs	County Agricultural Executive Committees
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CLA	Country Landowners Association
CoCo	Countryside Commission
CPRE	Council for the Protection of Rural England
CS	Countryside Stewardship
CWAECs	County War Agricultural Executive Committees
CWT	County Wildlife Trust
DAO	District Advisory Officer
DoE	Department of the Environment
DSS	Department of Social Services
EC	European Community
EN	English Nature
ENGO	Environmental Non-Governmental Organisation
ESAs	Environmentally Sensitive Areas
EU	European Union
FA	Forestry Authority
FBMT	Farm Business Management Training
FoE	Friends of the Earth
FRCA	Farming and Rural Conservancy Agency
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
GCT	Game Conservancy Trust
GWT	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
LA	Local Authorities
LIFE	Linking Farming and Environment
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAAS	National Agricultural Advisory Service

NAESG	National Agri-Environmental Steering Group
NAEF	National Agri-Environmental Forum
NCC	Nature Conservancy Council
NFU	National Farmers Union
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPA	National Park Authority
NRA	National Rivers Authority
NSAs	Nitrate Sensitive Areas
NWT	Norfolk Wildlife Trust
Ofsted	Office of Standards in Education
OS	Ordnance Survey
PATCH	Pollution, Agriculture and Technology Change Programme
PO	Project Officer
R & D	Research and Development
RSCs	Regional Service Centres
RSNC	Royal Society for Nature Conservation
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
SWT	Suffolk Wildlife Trust
UK	United Kingdom
WI	Women's Institute
WWF	World-wide Fund for Nature

PART I

INTRODUCTION

In the first part of this thesis, the following chapter seeks to provide an introductory background to the aims and objectives of the research. The conceptual and theoretical contexts in which the research shall be situated are introduced and justified, in light of existing research studies.

Chapter 1

Introduction

"The implementation problem is assumed to be a series of mundane decisions and interactions unworthy of the attention of scholars seeking the heady stuff of politics. Implementation is deceptively simple: it does not appear to involve any great issues [in reality however] ... the problems of implementation are profound" (van Meter and van Horn, 1975:450 & 452).

Interest in policy implementation has steadily grown in recent years as a number of policy analysts and academics have sought to understand and explain the apparent intractability of many policies formulated in Western industrialised societies (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973; Barrett and Fudge, 1981; Hogwood and Gunn, 1984; Cloke and Little, 1990; Ham and Hill, 1993). Of concern is the increasing realisation that for many policies formulated in the post-war period, implementation 'deficits', or 'gaps', have emerged where policy maker objectives are not always enacted at the ground level environment (Sabatier, 1986). In seeking to understand and explain such inconsistencies between policy and action, analysts have, over the years, adopted a variety of conceptual understandings of the policy implementation process, whereupon they have identified a plethora of structural and agency factors which are believed to influence and shape the wider policy process (Chapter 2). Of particular concern here is the role and influence that the local-level implementer or 'street-level bureaucrat', as they are often termed¹, is believed to have on the implementation of policy.

It is generally accepted amongst policy analysts and academics that the individual local-level implementer is a powerful autonomous actor who may greatly influence the implementation and outcome of policy (Lewis and Flynn, 1979; Ham, 1980; Knox and Cullen, 1981; Flynn, 1981). Critiquing early attempts at understanding policy implementation, Barrett and Fudge (1981), Cloke and Little (1990) and Hill (1993) are among some of the many scholars who assert that, rather than acting as subordinate bureaucrats implementing policy in accordance with a rational top-down system of administration, the beliefs, decisions and actions of the individual local-level implementer will influence the way in which policies are interpreted and subsequently transferred to recipients of policy (see also Prottas, 1977; Palumbo and Calista, 1990). Baum (1974.6) has gone as far as to argue that "instead of viewing power possessed by lower participants as aberrant, we may begin with the assumption that they alone will

¹The terms 'local-level implementer' and 'street-level bureaucrat' will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis. Both relate to actors who are employed by official bureaucracies to implement policies at the ground level.

determine the content of the policies they execute". In this context, many scholars have asserted that if analysts wish to understand policy implementation, they must firstly seek to understand the personal characteristics, behaviour, activities and relationships of the individual local-level implementer (Ham and Hill, 1993; Hudson, 1993). To date, however, little attempt has been made by contemporary analysts to build upon early studies of policy implementers. Many scholars accept the conceptual and theoretical debate concerning the local-level implementer as a powerful and influential actor, but few have attempted to support their arguments by conducting detailed empirical analyses of the role and influence of the contemporary policy implementer.

In an attempt to address this gap within current policy research, it is the primary aim of this thesis to revive interest in the policy implementer by analysing the role and influence that the 'local-level implementer' has on the implementation and outcome of contemporary policies. As a case study, the thesis focuses on the implementation of contemporary agri-environmental policy in England and Wales, within which the research seeks to analyse the role and influence that the agri-environmental implementer has on the outcome and 'success' of individual agri-environmental schemes.

Further, it is one of the major objectives of this thesis to develop an appropriate theoretical and/or conceptual framework in which to understand and analyse the 'local-level implementer'. To date, little attempt has been made by contemporary policy analysts to adopt a theoretical understanding of the role and activities of policy implementers. The majority of analyses have tended to be empirically based, analysing the local-level implementer in relation to specific case studies (e.g. Rubinstein, 1973; Satyamurti, 1981; Cooper, 1985), rather than as an analytically unique policy actor. In seeking to understand the role of the agri-environmental implementer, however, this thesis attempts to analyse the extent to which a universal theory of local-level implementers can provide a detailed and accurate understanding of any one specific policy implementer - in this case the agri-environmental implementer. The theory tested here is Michael Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy.

As Chapter 2 will outline, Michael Lipsky provides the most detailed micro-sociological analysis of the role and activities of the local-level implementer. He outlines the behavioural characteristics and activities of the policy implementer, in addition to describing their relationship with recipients of policy and bureaucratic superiors. As Chapter 3 discusses, however, the applicability of Lipsky's theory in relation to the agri-environmental implementer is brought into question. A number of researchers have identified a complex network of actors involved in the implementation of UK agri-environmental schemes. In this context, it is suggested here that Lipsky's micro-sociological theory may not enable the research to holistically analyse the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer in relation to

other policy actors. The thesis does not seek to deny that Lipsky's theory may provide an invaluable glimpse into the world of the individual local-level implementer. However, it is suggested that, in seeking to analyse the agri-environmental implementer, the research should attempt to adopt an alternative conceptual approach that analyses the policy implementer in relation to wider structural and agency variables. Following analysis of existing theoretical and conceptual approaches to policy, it is suggested here that the actor-network approach may provide a more useful analytical framework in which to analyse the relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer. In summary, therefore, this thesis has three primary concerns:

- i) To further our understanding of the role and influence of local-level implementers with specific reference to the agri-environmental implementer.
- ii) To develop an appropriate theoretical and/or conceptual understanding of the role and influence of the 'local-level implementer'. This will involve analysing the applicability of Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy in an analysis of the agri-environmental implementer and further.
- iii) To apply and analyse the usefulness of the actor-network approach to further our understanding of the agri-environmental implementer.

But why is there a need to focus on the implementation of agri-environmental policy in England and Wales, and, in particular, on the role and influence of the individual agri-environmental implementer? Since the 1980s, agri-environmental policies have evolved as a central feature of both European and UK agricultural development strategies. Following four decades of 'productivist' thinking amongst Ministers, advisors, and farmers, concerns over the increasing costs of farm support mechanisms and increasing pressure from environmentalists have forced policy-makers to formulate new policies and schemes designed to decrease productivity levels and, at the same time, encourage farmers to adopt environmentally sensitive farming practices (Whitby and Lowe, 1994; Whitby, 1996; Winter, 1996; Harvey, 1997). Currently, under the European Union's (EU) Agri-Environment Regulation 2078/92/EEC, which places an obligation on all member states to implement a national agri-environmental programme, the United Kingdom (UK) has introduced a number of voluntary agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales that are designed to reward farmers for conserving specific areas of the countryside (see Table 1.1). Some of these schemes, namely the Habitat Scheme, Countryside Access Scheme, Moorland Scheme, Tir Cymen and Organic Aid scheme, are currently implemented as pilot schemes, while the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), Nitrate Sensitive Areas (NSAs) and Countryside Stewardship (CS) schemes were originally formulated as part of EU Regulation 797 85/EEC which accompanied the first reform of the CAP in 1985 (MAFF, 1993; Potter, 1998). The majority of these schemes are implemented by individual agri-environmental implementers - or project officers (POs) as they are officially termed - who are employed within MAFF's

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs)	Introduced in 1987 the ESA scheme is the earliest of MAFF's agri-environmental schemes. It was formulated with the purpose of protecting the landscape, wildlife and historic interest of specific areas of the UK, which were perceived to be threatened by contemporary farming methods. Within these areas farmers are able to enter into a 10 year agreement (with a five year opt out clause) where they will receive annual payments on each hectare of land entered into the scheme. In doing so they will be expected to adhere to specific agricultural practices which will vary from a basic tier of management practices such as the retention of field boundaries and the protection of archaeological features to more demanding practices such as the recreation of extensive grassland or the establishment of field margins. The level of payments will vary in accordance to the tiers entered into. Each ESA is administered and implemented by the FRCA POs/APOs.
Countryside Stewardship (CS) Scheme	Formulated by the Countryside Commission in 1991 as a pilot project, the CS scheme was transferred to MAFF in April 1996 where it is currently administered and implemented through a partnership of FRCA POs/APOs and local environmental interest groups. The scheme applies throughout England where it offers payments to farmers willing to enhance, manage, restore or re-create particular habitat types on their farms. The habitats targeted by the scheme include, chalk and limestone grassland, waterside land, lowland heath, the coast, uplands, old meadows and pastures, historic landscapes, old orchards, field boundaries and field margins.
Nitrate Sensitive Areas (NSAs)	Since 1990, 32 NSAs have been established throughout England. The areas which are predominately arable in nature are located in key sources of public water supplies. In an attempt to reduce or stabilise nitrate levels in these supplies, farmers, whose land falls within these areas are offered financial payment if they agree to implement specific management practices that will reduce nitrate leaching. The scheme is administered and implemented by individual FRCA POs/APOs.
Habitat Scheme	Launched in 1994, the Habitat Scheme is still in a pilot phase. It was formulated with the primary aim of creating or enhancing certain valuable habitats by taking land out of agricultural production, or by introducing appropriate management regimes. The scheme targets three particular habitats, water fringes, where the scheme targets six specific areas, coastal Saltmarsh, and farmland previously in the five year set-aside scheme. Farmers receive financial payment for participating in the schemes which are implemented by FRCA POs/APOs.
Moorland Scheme	Launched in 1995, the Moorland Scheme aims to protect and improve the upland moorland environment. Farmers are encouraged to implement a range of positive measures designed to conserve the moorland environment. Maximum limits are placed on stocking densities for example and farmers are paid for the number of ewes removed from the land. This scheme is administered and implemented by the FRCA POs/APOs.
Countryside Access Scheme (CAS)	The CAS offers financial incentives to those farmers willing to make suitable areas of their farmland accessible to the public for walking. Farmers are required to enter the land into guaranteed set-aside, whereupon they are expected to adhere to normal set-aside rules, and, in addition, comply with specific access management conditions. This is administered and implemented by FRCA POs/APOs.
Organic Aid Scheme	The Organic Aid scheme offers financial incentives to farmers wishing to convert their conventional farming practices to organic methods. It is one of the only schemes formulated by MAFF that is not implemented by the FRCA POs/APOs. Rather, scheme applicants are inspected annually by inspectors from the UK Register of Organic Food Standards or on behalf of another registered organic sector body.
Tŷr Cymen	Tŷr Cymen is an experimental scheme available only to farmers in Wales. Aligned to England's CS scheme, it offers annual payments for positive management of farmland which benefits wildlife, landscapes, archaeology and geology. It is currently only available in three pilot areas, but due to its popularity amongst the farming communities in these areas the scheme is set to expand and be made available to farmers throughout Wales.

Table. 1.1. Agri-Environmental Schemes in England and Wales Formulated in Response to EU Regulation 2078/92/EEC (Source: Whitby, 1994, 1996; MAFF, 1996a; Winter, 1996; Potter, 1998).

Farming and Rural Conservancy Agency (FRCA)². Operating at the ground level environment and in direct contact with the farming community, the FRCA POs are expected to implement the agri-environmental schemes on behalf of MAFF by encouraging eligible farmers to participate in the schemes, and, following this, to manage the schemes by ensuring that participants adhere to MAFF's agri-environmental objectives (Chapter 3).

As greater financial and political emphasis has been placed on post-productivist modes of agriculture, many researchers since the mid-1980s have sought to analyse the implementation and effectiveness of the UK's agri-environmental policy programme (e.g. Potter, 1983; Brotherton, 1989, 1991; Robinson, 1991; Morris, 1993; Marsden et al., 1993; Ward, 1994; Whitby, 1994; Gilg, 1996; Winter, 1996). Initially responding to prevailing policy maker objectives, which were concerned with the enrolment of as many farmers and land as possible into the voluntary schemes, many research studies were conducted on farmers' agri-environmental decision-making strategies, where attempts were made to discern what factors, if any, were influencing farmers' willingness and ability to participate in agri-environmental schemes (Potter and Gasson, 1988; Tarrant and Cobb, 1991; Friends of the Earth, 1992; Potter and Lobley, 1992; Froud, 1994; Skerratt, 1994). This research proved to be very informative and potentially useful for future policy makers and agri-environmental implementers. Through their empirical studies, researchers developed a spectrum of 'typical' agri-environmental adopters and non-adopters. They identified which farmers may need more encouragement and advice in order to enrol them into the schemes and, at the other end of the spectrum, identified which farmers are often willing to participate in an agri-environmental scheme, and who may, thus, be actively targeted when a new scheme is developed and promoted (Morris and Potter, 1995; Wilson, 1997). Expanding upon these studies, an increasing number of contemporary agri-environmental researchers have sought to adopt political-economy and regulation theories in order to analyse the macro-structural context of the agri-environmental implementation process. In particular, they have analysed the influence that wider political and market forces have on the implementation process (Whatmore et al., 1987; Maclaren, 1992; Munton et al., 1992; Le Heron, 1993; Marsden and Acre, 1995). Further, they have attempted to analyse the influence that property rights have on farmers' decisions to participate in an agri-environmental scheme (Marsden et al., 1993; Crabtree and Chalmers, 1994), the impact that consumerism has recently had on the agri-environmental policy process (Ward et al., 1995), and the role of the wider agri-environmental information network on farmers' knowledge and participatory behaviour (Clark, 1989, Winter, 1995). However, despite established theoretical and empirical debates, which advocate that local-level implementers are influential actors in the implementation of policies, little attempt has been

² The terms 'agri-environmental implementer' and 'FRCA project officer' will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis to describe individuals employed by MAFF to implement the UK agri-environmental schemes

made by agri-environmental researchers to analyse the role and relative influence that the individual agri-environmental implementer (i.e. FRCA PO) has on the implementation and effectiveness of the UK's voluntary agri-environmental schemes.

Following a detailed analysis of the most appropriate conceptual framework in which to situate this study, the thesis seeks to close the gap within existing agri-environmental research by producing an in-depth analysis of the role and influence that the FRCA PO has on the implementation of two specific agri-environmental schemes, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. It seeks to analyse the personal backgrounds, implementation strategies and relationships of the FRCA PO, and to ascertain the extent to which they are a key actor in the implementation of UK agri-environmental schemes. In doing so, it is hoped that this thesis may contribute, firstly, to our continued understanding of the implementation and effectiveness of UK agri-environmental policy, and, secondly, to further our conceptual understanding of local-level implementers such as the FRCA POs.

Structure of Thesis

The theoretical and conceptual debates surrounding the local-level implementer are discussed in Chapter 2. The emergence of the local-level implementer as an important policy actor is examined and Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy is outlined. Chapter 3 situates the research within the context of the agri-environmental implementer, where analysis seeks to discern the most appropriate theoretical and/or conceptual framework in which to analyse the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer. Chapter 4 of the thesis will provide a detailed description of the methodologies used within the research and outline how these were applied within the two case study areas - the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. Following this, Part IV contains an empirical analysis of the FRCA PO, examining their relationship with actors such as MAFF, the FRCA, farmers and environmental organisations in both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. Drawing on a national postal questionnaire conducted as part of the research, Chapter 5 provides a detailed analysis of the FRCA PO, highlighting their personal characteristics (i.e. age, gender), their educational background, employment history and training. Following this, the chapter examines the relationship of the FRCA PO with MAFF and the FRCA. Chapter 6 focuses on the relationship between the FRCA PO and farmers both participating and not participating within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. Attention is drawn to the farmers' attitudes towards the POs and the strategies used by the officers to enrol farmers into ESA agreements. Chapter 7, then, furthers our understanding of the influence of the FRCA PO by examining the relationship of the FRCA POs with a number of interest groups involved with the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. In light of the empirical analysis, Part V of the thesis (i.e. Chapters 8 and 9) analyses the applicability of

Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy and the actor-network approach. Concluding remarks and suggestions for future conceptual and empirical research are given in Chapter 10.

PART II

CONCEPTUALISING STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRATS AND THE AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLEMENTER

As Part I outlined street-level bureaucrats and, in particular, the agri-environmental implementer have been placed at the heart of this thesis. Drawing upon established conceptual debates that the local-level implementer is one of the most powerful and influential policy actors, the research seeks to contribute to current policy research and agri-environmental studies by analysing the role and influence that the agri-environmental implementer has on the implementation and outcome of contemporary UK agri-environmental schemes. Prior to empirical analyses, however, this section of the thesis seeks to develop and establish the conceptual and theoretical bases of the research. Existing conceptualisations of local-level implementers are analysed, paying particular attention to Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy which, to date, provides one of the primary analytical frameworks in which to study any one local-level implementer (Chapter 2). Following this, the thesis seeks to place the conceptual debate within the agri-environmental context of the research. The role of the FRCA PO is examined in greater detail, with an initial analysis of the power and influence that the PO is believed to exert on the UK's agri-environmental policy process. However, as this section of the thesis goes on to analyse, the applicability of Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy in relation to the agri-environmental implementer is brought into question. As an alternative conceptual and methodological approach for the research, an actor-network approach is advocated (Chapter 3).

Chapter 2

Understanding the Street-Level Bureaucrat

2.1 Introduction

As Chapter 1 briefly outlined, it is clearly evident that within the last two decades, ‘policy implementation’ has evolved as a central feature of analysis throughout American and Western European academic communities. Previously rooted within political science theories and public administration studies, an increasing number of academics, including geographers, economists and sociologists have sought to analyse and understand the development and implementation of governmental policies (Palumbo and Calista, 1990; Jones, 1991; Liefferink et al., 1993; Ham and Hill, 1993; Gilg, 1996; Winter, 1996). In the context of rural sociology, Crow et al. (1990:255) recently outlined, for example, that “... it is clear that rural social science in Britain is currently enjoying something of an invigoration from an infusion of political science theory”. This has been further illustrated in the number of publications that have directly addressed the issue of policy implementation within rural studies (see Barrett and Fudge, 1981; Cloke, 1987; Cloke and Little, 1990).

Of particular concern to policy analysts and academics are the apparent inconsistencies that evidently arise between the objectives of many policies, and, their enactment at the ground level. Blacksell and Gilg’s (1981) study of housing in rural Devon found, for example, that the statutory policy for the planned location of new dwellings was not fulfilled by the existing planning permission system. Commenting on Blacksell and Gilg’s study, Cloke and Hanrahan (1984:261) later concluded that “an *implementation problem* ... [is clearly] ... the major cause of inadequate planning responses to perceived social and economic needs in the countryside” (original emphasis). Likewise, Mann (1982:1) has noted in the context of environmental policies that:

“In the post-World War II period, particularly the 1960s, there was rapid ... creation of new programs and agencies to meet newly perceived needs ... [However] ... the new programs tended to have too little foundation for the asserted cause-and-effect relationship between proffered solution and identified problem; too much controversy about the programs and therefore inevitable resistance to their operations... The result was often failure or at least limited success and disillusionment with the public policy as an instrument of social problem solving”.

Recognising that an increasing number of post-war policies and programs are experiencing gaps between policy intention and action, many analysts have, over the years, sought to

examine and understand the process of implementation, in an attempt to locate and rectify any ‘problems’ within the policy process (Dunsire, 1978, Yanow, 1990; Hill, 1993). In doing so, a variety of conceptual and theoretical understandings of policy implementation have been developed and advocated. As this chapter will outline, early analyses primarily focused on the formulation of policy, where it was promulgated that implementation deficits are an inevitable outcome of inadequately devised policy maker objectives. However, as policy implementation studies have evolved, this top-down perspective has steadily declined as the street-level bureaucrat has emerged, conceptually, as a powerful and influential policy actor, regarded by many academics and analysts as the key to the implementation and enactment of policy.

Given the objectives of the thesis, this chapter seeks to provide a detailed analysis of this conceptual development within implementation research. Particular attention will be paid to critics of the early top-down model of implementation, as it was through these debates that the street-level bureaucrat emerged as an important analytical policy actor. Following this, the chapter will seek to outline, in detail, existing conceptualisations of the street-level bureaucrat. Attention will be paid to their supposed position within policy communities and their role as professionals within the wider policy process. The second half of the chapter will then turn to Michael Lipsky’s (1969, 1980, 1981) theory of street-level bureaucracy which has attempted to synthesise existing conceptual debates within a universal theory of local-level implementers.

2.2 Understanding Policy Implementation and the Street-Level Bureaucrat: The Early Years

One of the first major attempts to open up the policy process, and, to analyse gaps between policy and action, was made by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) in their influential study of an employment programme aimed at minority groups in Oakland, California. The programme provided funds and loans for new businesses in order to encourage greater economic investment in Oakland and new employment opportunities for ethnic groups. Despite much initial goodwill, Pressman and Wildavsky observed that, few loans were taken up by firms, and where new jobs were created, only a small proportion of these were filled by members of minority groups. Pressman and Wildavsky concluded that, such an apparent failure of Oakland’s programme was primarily due to an inadequate theory of work creation advocated by the policy makers. According to Pressman and Wildavsky, any policy is a hypothesis containing individual conditions and predicted consequences. Policy makers will reason that “if X is done at time t (1) then Y will result at time t (2)” (Hogwood and Gunn, 1993:240). Thus, every policy incorporates a theory of cause and effect. If policy objectives fail to be implemented at the ground level, as in the case of the Oakland programme, then Pressman and

Wildavsky assert that it may be the underlying theory which is fundamentally flawed, rather than the implementation process (see Bardach, 1977).

This was further supported by Hogwood and Gunn (1984, 1993) who advocate that discrepancies between policy and action are more likely to emanate from policy objectives, rather than during the execution of the policy. They argue that, “policies are sometimes ineffective not because they are badly implemented, but because they are bad policies. That is, the policy may be based upon an inadequate understanding of a problem to be solved, its causes and cure; or of an opportunity, its nature and what is needed to exploit it” (Hogwood and Gunn, 1993:249).

These early attempts at understanding and explaining inconsistencies between policy formulation and implementation, are encapsulated within a positivist ‘top-down model’, which has been used by a number of analysts to conceptualise policy implementation (Smith, 1973; van Meter and van Horn, 1975; Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1979). Emanating from Weberian ideas of hierarchical organisation and management (Weber, 1947), the top-down approach views policy formulation and implementation as separate dichotomous entities. Policy implementation represents a discrete stage within a rational process of decision making, which will follow ‘policy making’ and precede ‘policy evaluation’ (Baker, 1972; Jenkins, 1978) (Fig. 2.1).

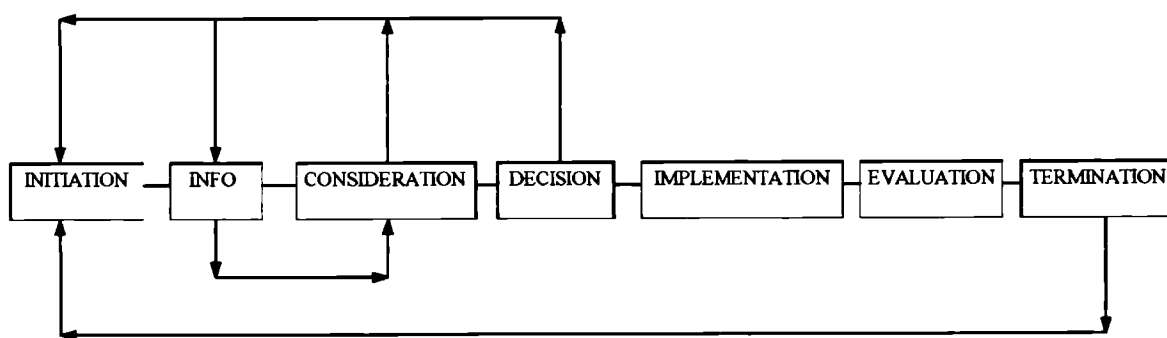


Fig. 2.1. A rational decision-making view of the policy process (Jenkins, 1978)

Accordingly, it is believed that through such a rational sequential chain of events, policies that are formulated and introduced by actors at the ‘top’ of a hierarchy will, following implementation, reach compliance at the ground level (Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1979, 1980). In other words, once a policy has been made it is assumed that it will be implemented and the outcome of implementation will be close to that anticipated by policy makers (Smith, 1973). If an implementation deficit arises, the top-down approach asserts that, there will be a

fundamental flaw in the objectives and causal theory of policy, rather than in the subordinate implementation process (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973; Hogwood and Gunn, 1984, 1993).

In this context, the top-down approach views local-level implementers as subordinate bureaucrats to policy-makers. Quoting Weber (1947), Page (1992:30) asserts that, “politicians in parliament and the cabinet are to make the policy, while bureaucrats are to simply carry out the orders, never being entrusted with policy-making functions” Thus, it is assumed that implementers will single-mindedly pursue the objectives and implement the decisions of their superiors. As individuals they will remain ‘neutral’, possessing no personal interests that may differ from the policy-makers, or, if they do, they will refrain from pursuing them in their day to day activities (Jones, 1995). According to top-down theorists, such a ‘superior-subordinate’ relationship between policy-makers and implementers is, to a large extent, maintained and controlled through the imposition of legal and political mechanisms, designed to limit the autonomy of local-level implementers and to assure their compliance to policy-maker objectives. “Superiors are considered to initiate downward information flows by giving instructions to subordinates, and to ensure compliance with administrative directives by strict formal oversight and sanctioning” (Wirth, 1986:601). In his discussion of control in public administration, Wirth (1986) goes on to outline the many different sources of control often utilised by bureaucratic superiors. These include, legislation, statutes, incentive targets and surveillance of implementers’ behaviour through direct observation of activities or through periodic reports and records. Thus, as Helms et al., (1989:180-181) conclude:

“agencies and practitioners responsible for the implementation of ... policy are bound by complex legal requirements and restraints. [They] are expected to perform in compliance with legal mandates. ... To facilitate fit between the intent of statutes and the operation of programs, practitioners should [thus] acquire a basic understanding of the legal principles that guide administrative processes in public policy implementation”.

Understanding policy implementation in terms of this top-down bureaucratic model is, according to Jones (1991:535), reflective of the “‘official’ explanation of policy making found in [Britain’s] Central Office of Information publications and the utterances of civil servants in public”. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that in terms of public policy-making Britain’s constitutional ruling advocates a rational bureaucratic policy process. Essentially, it “maintains that Parliament represents and interprets the public will through its representatives, who formulate executive policies which are faithfully implemented by civil servants” (Jones, 1991:535). This has been further outlined by Dearlove and Saunders (1984:119) who, earlier, argued that:

“... the orthodox position with respect to the power and position of the civil service is clear enough. Civil servants are politically neutral, serving with equal loyalty government’s of any political persuasion ... The Times put it all very nicely in a leader

in 1977: 'the constitutional position is both crystal clear and entirely sufficient - Officials propose, ministers dispose and officials execute'.

However, while Britain's 'official' policy process is clearly outlined in Constitutional ruling, its application by individual governments and the wider society is, on occasion, believed to reflect a different scenario to the top-down model of policy implementation. Winter (1996:14) notes, for example, that:

"time constraints alone mean that much of the groundwork for policy making is done by political parties, particularly by the party that is in government, or by civil servants in Whitehall. Thus, rather more plausible variants of the formal structural model have emphasised the important role of political parties, as channels of policy making, and of the Cabinet and the Civil Service in formulating policy" (original emphasis).

In this context, Winter (1996:14) goes on to note that while the top-down model may provide an insight into British policy formulation and implementation, analyses should look beyond "Parliament and the executive and consider the role of pressure groups and/or private interests in determining the policy agenda".

Indeed, as interest in policy implementation has evolved, the top-down bureaucratic concept of policy, power and control has become increasingly criticised and re-evaluated as an appropriate conceptual framework in which to analyse and understand the policy implementation process. Critics argue that top-down theorists, such as Weber (1947) and Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), place too much emphasis on policy maker objectives, with little analysis of the implementation process, and, in particular, the role of local-level implementers as autonomous actors shaping and redefining the content of policies (Lewis and Flynn, 1979; Barrett and Fudge, 1981; Hjern and Porter, 1981; Hjern and Hull, 1982; Cloke and Little, 1990).

Critiquing the top-down model

According to Barrett and Hill (1986), a fundamental flaw in the top-down model is the assumption that policy formulation and implementation exist as dichotomous entities with implementation following on from, what is advocated as, the more important and influential stage of policy formulation. Barrett and Hill (1986:86) advocate, however, that in reality "one can not separate the process of policy making and policy implementation - they are a continuum. Implementation must be regarded as an integral part of the policy process rather than an administrative 'follow-on' from policy-making" (Barrett and Hill, 1986:86). This has been further supported by Nakamura and Smallwood (1980), Hjern (1982), Cloke and Hanrahan (1984) and Cloke (1987) who, collectively, argue that any conception of a rational and sequential dichotomy between policy and implementation is ultimately false. They go on to assert that instead policy formulation and implementation should be treated as dynamic and

interactive processes, where policy may be “seen to be made as it is being administered and administered as it is being made” (Anderson, 1975:98).

At the heart of this debate is the notion that “political processes by which policy is mediated, negotiated and modified during its formulation and legitimation” will not cease when initial policy decisions have been made (Barrett and Hill, 1986:35). Rather, it is believed that the process of political bargaining and negotiation will continue to influence and shape policy as implementers and recipients of policy seek to protect or enhance their own interests and objectives. Thus, as Barrett and Hill (1986:35-36) have gone on to outline, this conception of implementation takes the analyst away “from the traditional focus on formal organisational hierarchies, communication and control mechanisms, and places more emphasis on ... the multiplicity of actors and agencies involved ... [in the implementation process]” - actors such as the local-level implementer.

Providing an early contribution to this debate, Parkinson (1958) argued in his critique of Weber’s (1947) rational model of bureaucracy that implementers will never behave as true subordinate bureaucrats. Rather than complying to policy maker objectives, they believed that implementers would seek to implement their own goals and objectives, and in turn reformulate policies so as to match and offer a solution to the problems of society in accordance with their own definitions and interests. In this context, Parkinson (1958) asserted that the action taken by recipients at the ground level would reflect the objectives of the individual implementer, rather than of the ‘top’ policy makers’ (see Gouldner, 1954; Dunsire, 1978; Hjerm and Porter, 1981). Likewise, Hasenfeld and English (1974:11) argued that, local-level implementers will “bring into ... [the policy process] ... varied external status characteristics reflecting many different values and attitudes” which, they believed, would, accordingly, influence the way in which implementers interpret and translate policy maker objectives.

Although Breton and Wintrobe (1982) asserted that this was a somewhat radical departure from the top-down model of policy implementation, an increasing number of scholars have, since the late 1970s and early 1980s, turned their attention towards policy implementers, in the belief that they are potentially powerful and influential policy actors who warrant further investigation. Barrett and Fudge (1981:26) argue, for example, that:

“actors and agencies should not be considered in single roles, as makers of policy for others to implement or indeed simply as the implementers of other’s policies; instead they should be viewed in a combination of roles including that of interested party affecting the outcome of policies”.

More recently, Cloke and Little (1990:97) have asserted that there is a need to “highlight the understanding of localised action, rather than merely seeing it as the end result of a longer chain of decision-making”. Further, Hudson (1993) has advocated for greater analysis of

street-level bureaucrats, whom he believes are the key to understanding policy implementation. Expanding upon these debates, the following section will conduct a more detailed analysis of the conceptualisations surrounding the role and influence of the policy implementer. As it will be discussed, the individual local-level implementer is believed to be a powerful and influential policy actor who may often shape and determine the future direction of policies. In this context, many scholars have gone on to assert that if the implementation of policies is to be fully understood, analysts must seek to understand the role and influence of the local-level implementer.

2.3 The Role and Influence of the Street-level Bureaucrat

As Parkinson (1958) advocated, many analysts have come to regard the local-level implementer as a powerful independent decision-maker who may reject or deflect centrally-mandated policies in accordance with their personal 'assumptive worlds' - that is, their interests, motives, values and objectives (Young, 1977; Ham, 1980). Van Meter and van Horn (1975:473) argued, for example, that:

"implementers may fail to execute policies faithfully because they reject the goals contained in them. ... The goals of a policy may be rejected for a variety of reasons: they may offend implementers' personal value systems, extraorganizational loyalties, sense of self-interest, or existing and preferred relationships".

This was further supported by Lewis and Flynn (1978, 1979) in their study of urban planning, where it was discovered that planning policies were not implemented in a rational decision-making process. Reporting disagreements over policy goals, vagueness about policy details, procedural complexity and conflict amongst policy actors, Lewis and Flynn (1978) concluded by asserting that the individual goals and actions of local policy actors had a great influence on how the planning policies were implemented. Accordingly, they asserted that the policy analyst must accept that "an individual actor is not just a cog in a machine" (Lewis and Flynn, 1978:11). They will act as mediators between the external world of the policy process, and the political structure through which policies are delivered. "The way in which the individual ... mediates between these two sets of concerns are key processes in understanding what 'gets done'" (Lewis and Flynn, 1978:11). In short, the perceptions, interests and personal attitudes of policy implementers are key determinants of policy implementation and outcome.

Given this conceptualisation, a number of policy analysts, commonly referred to as the 'bottom-uppers', have sought to further an understanding of the power and influence wielded by local-level implementers, by analysing how their perceptions, interests, objectives and decisions are shaped and imposed on the policy process (Derthrick, 1972; Berman and McLaughlin, 1976; Williams and Elmore, 1976; Hanf and Scharpf, 1978; Barrett and Fudge,

1981, Goodsell, 1981; Hjerm and Porter, 1981). Adopting theories of behaviourism, a few individual researchers have discussed the role and influence that implementers' personal characterisations, such as their gender, age and education have on their implementory decisions and actions (Smith and Ostrom, 1974; Stone, 1981). In their survey of police attitudes, for example, Nelson et al. (1969) noted that officers' educational background had a marked effect on their attitudes and actions towards their 'clients'. Educated police officers were found to take a less punitive view than their less educated colleagues and were further believed to possess far greater aspirations and to be more work motivated than their co-workers. Similarly, Teahan (1975) conducted research on the American police force and discovered that age plays a central role in influencing implementers attitudes and behaviour. In general, it was evident that views towards the public became less sympathetic and more punitive with increasing age and experience. Moreover, Stone (1981:47) asserts that "youthful idealism is a close cousin of education; it too engenders hope that work will be interesting and fulfilling. Ageing and accumulating experience, on the other hand, often lead to a lessened involvement in one's work. Personal fulfilment may be sought outside the work role". Thus, the older the policy implementer, the less work conscience and committed they can be expected to be. The more youthful and educated individuals, on the other hand, may be expected to have a greater input into the policy implementation process. They may actively seek to reject and/or modify policy maker objectives believing that they are not in the best interests of the recipients of policy, or that they are simply unattainable given the local socio-economic and political environment.

Expanding upon these analyses, a group of scholars and researchers have gone on to advocate that, in addition to personal characterisations, the decisions and actions of many local-level implementers will be influenced and shaped by the 'professional-bureaucratic complex' (Beer, 1976) in which they are invariably situated (Friedson, 1970, 1974; Hasenfeld and English, 1974; Ham and Hill, 1993). It is widely recognised that implementers of public policy tend to be members of a professional elite who, by nature, possess similar educational qualifications, interests and objectives (Greenwood, 1957; Ham, 1985; Laffin, 1986). In Britain, for example, it is evident that as professionals both teachers and doctors are expected to possess standard qualifications in order to be able to implement the government's educational and health policies (Harrison et al., 1990; Smith, 1994). Further, professionals are expected to adhere to a set of internal ethical and cultural norms which effectively shape and control their personal decisions and actions. In particular, Stone (1981:46) notes that "professionals are supposed to be inculcated with a service ethos - an inner desire to serve the best interests of clients and promote their welfare". In this context, professionals are expected to be 'client-oriented', to attach greater importance to the feelings and behaviour of recipients of policy. Thus, if a professional feels that policies are not in the best interests of their clients, it is widely recognised that they may seek to modify policy maker objectives in order to further the well-being of recipients of policy (Larson, 1977; Goodsell, 1981; Laffin, 1986).

At the heart of this concept of professionalism is the notion of autonomy, and, in particular, the level of autonomous decision-making that professional bureaucrats may exert over the policy process. It is widely asserted that, as professionals modify policies their decisions and actions are generally conducted with the trust and full support of policy makers and bureaucratic superiors (Johnson, 1972; Friedson, 1974). As Laffin (1986) details, professionals may claim exclusive rights to knowledge and expertise which policy makers invariably recognise as an essential pre-requisite for policies to be implemented at the ground level as efficiently and effectively as possible. In this context, professionals are permitted considerable levels of discretion and autonomy so that they may implement policies in accordance with their expert knowledge and judgement. In conclusion, Laffin (1986:15) asserts that “the possession of accepted knowledge can endow the holder with influence that may substitute for the holder’s lack of organisational or political power relative to other actors and vice versa”. Thus, despite the lowly position occupied by implementers within the policy hierarchy, their intimate knowledge and relationship with the locality and the policy issue, is believed to propel the local-level implementer into the policy process as a highly important and influential actor (Mechanic, 1968; Johnson and O’Connor, 1979; Palumbo and Calista, 1990).

Drawing together such conceptions of the role and influence of local-level implementers, Michael Lipsky (1969, 1980, 1981), a professor of political science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology has attempted to develop a universal theory of street-level bureaucracy, where the behavioural characteristics and social relations of any one local-level implementer can be understood. According to Prottas (1977), Lipsky’s theory of street-level bureaucracy represents a distinct advancement in studies of policy implementation. Where previously local-level implementers have been analysed in relation to specific case studies, Prottas (1977:4) asserts that:

“the great utility of Lipsky’s work lies in his assertion that street-level bureaucrats are an analytically unique category and that their interactions with clients [recipients of policy] can be understood in terms of generic to the role rather than in organisationally specific ad hoc terms” (Prottas, 1977:4).

More recently, Hudson (1993) has asserted that Lipsky’s theory of street-level bureaucracy has enormous potential for helping the contemporary analyst to understand the process of policy implementation. He argues that “academically, ... [there is a] ... pressing need to find out more about how street-level bureaucrats are actually behaving. Getting at the truth would be problematic”, but, to date, Lipsky’s theory provides the most detailed theoretical exposition of the role and activities of local-level implementers, which may greatly assist the contemporary analyst in understanding the relative influence of specific actors implementing policy (Hudson, 1993:397).

2.4 Lipsky's Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy

Using the term 'street-level bureaucrat', Lipsky has specifically focused upon public service workers, such as teachers, policemen, doctors and social workers, who interact directly with recipients of public policy during their day to day work. Lipsky goes on to describe the street-level bureaucrat as a pivotal link between policy makers and policy target groups. They act in a boundary spanning role, bringing policy maker objectives down to the ground level, whereupon, they may be enacted by recipients of policy. As Prottas (1977:5) argues, "it is the street-level bureaucrat who actually delivers the agency's service".

At the heart of Lipsky's theory is the notion that street-level bureaucrats are extremely powerful, autonomous, 'professional' workers, whose individual decisions and actions may reformulate policy. According to Lipsky (1980:xii):

"the decisions of the street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out".

Thus, it is through implementation 'on the street' that *de facto* policy is developed. Any inconsistency between policy maker objectives and policy enactment is, according to Lipsky, directly related to the street-level bureaucrat (see Ham and Hill, 1993).

Autonomy

Throughout Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy, it is asserted that street-level bureaucrats are highly autonomous policy actors, who possess a considerable level of discretionary freedom in their day to day work. By the very nature of street-level bureaucrats professional positions, they operate at the ground level environment where they tend to be geographically distanced from their bureaucratic superiors (Lipsky, 1969, 1980; Page, 1992; Hudson, 1993). Police officers often operate while on 'the beat', for example, while their superiors tend to be office bound at both local and national level (Rubinstein, 1973). Concomitantly, social workers will often be expected to conduct individual house visits, where they will interact with the recipients of policy in the absence of the Social Services' authority (Jacobs, 1970; Zimmerman, 1971). Consequently, Lipsky asserts that street-level bureaucrats will often operate in surroundings remote from many forms of hierarchical control.

"The policy delivered by the street-level bureaucrat is most often immediate and personal. They usually make decisions on the spot and their determinations are focused entirely on the individual ... [as a result] ... they characteristically possess high levels of autonomy from their superiors" (Lipsky, 1980:8).

As discussed, this has been supported by a number of scholars in America and Europe who have adopted a bottom-up approach to policy analysis and argued that, the ability of bureaucratic superiors to guide and control the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats is virtually impossible to achieve (see Berman and McLaughlin, 1976; Hanf and Scharpf, 1978; Elmore, 1980; Barrett and Fudge, 1981).

Within his theory of street-level bureaucracy, Lipsky does recognise that often bureaucratic superiors will attempt to control and monitor the decisions and actions of the street-level bureaucrat. "Public managers ... [may] ... write manuals ... audit the performance of workers ... and insist that workers specify objectives in the hope that accountability can be more effectively monitored" (Lipsky, 1980:162). Prottas (1977) argues that such attempts to monitor and control street-level bureaucratic work will be particularly evident where a high level of public resources have been invested in the implementation process.

"All of the street level bureaucrat's decisions about ... [recipients of policy] ... are not of equal importance to the agency. The agency's interest in ... [monitoring] ... follows from its desire to control the use of its resources, and so its concern with individual decisions is roughly proportional to the resources committed by those decisions" (Prottas, 1977:17).

However, Prottas (1977) goes on to assert that any attempt to tightly circumscribe the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats will undoubtedly be resisted by policy implementers (see Elmore, 1980). Indeed, Downs (1967:147) makes it a 'law' of organisational behaviour that "the greater effort made to control subordinate officials, the greater the efforts by those subordinates to evade or counteract such control". Hill and Bramley (1986) went as far as to argue that, tighter hierarchical controls will cause low motivation amongst street-level workers. They will restrict their level of work productivity and may in extreme cases resort to methods of industrial sabotage and strikes, in order to protest against forms of bureaucratic accountability. Indeed, it was evident in Weatherley et al.'s (1980) study of US social workers that the Department of Social Services (DSS) encountered a number of difficulties when they attempted to introduce new methods to control and monitor the work of their 'street-level' employees. In an attempt to reorganise the administrative structure of the DSS, 'top' managerial staff within the department affirmed their commitment to implementing performance standards and output measures, as a means of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of social service delivery. However, Weatherley et al. (1980) observed that operating in surroundings remote from the DSS, social workers sought to avoid new forms of accountability by implementing their own administrative system to deal with official paperwork. Weatherley et al. (1980:569) argued that, "workers are aware of management's concern that these unsanctioned forms undermine hierarchical control and stand in the way of

uniform service delivery [but the] workers justify these unofficial forms as more realistic ... to their immediate needs than those passed down from above”.

In this context, Prottas (1977) argues that, the majority of street-level bureaucracies will refrain from imposing rigid forms of accountability through fear of alienating their street-level workers. Moreover, Prottas argues that the bureaucratic superiors are highly dependent upon the street-level bureaucrat to implement policy at the ground level. “The ‘output’ of a public service bureaucracy is the work of the street-level bureaucrat” and, thus, few bureaucracies would wish to jeopardise their productivity by tightly circumscribing their local-level implementers (Prottas, 1977:28). Indeed, while recognising that bureaucratic superiors may wish to control street-level bureaucrats, Lipsky asserts that, in doing so, the governing elite will threaten the very nature and objectives of street-level bureaucracies which require people to make decisions about other people. As Hudson (1993) outlined, policemen decide who to arrest, for example, and whose behaviour to overlook; teachers make decisions on who is teachable; social workers decide on who needs support; healthcare workers establish who needs priority care, and, housing letting officers decide on who gets accommodation.

Discretion

Central to this issue of decision-making is the notion of discretion, and, in particular, the level of discretionary power that the street-level bureaucrat may possess and exercise. In what has, perhaps, been the most influential book on the issue of discretion, Davis (1969:4) asserts that, “a public officer has discretion wherever the effective limits on his power leave him [sic] free to make a choice among possible courses of action and inaction”. While generally accepted as a useful definition (see Ham and Hill, 1993), Davis’ notion of discretion has been criticised as a loosely defined concept that embraces a wide range of phenomena (Donnison, 1977). Developing a more restrictive definition, Bull (1980) argues that a distinction should be made between situations that only require bureaucrats to judge and interpret regulations; and those occasions where the rules within a bureaucracy give implementers the freedom to interpret their tasks and make decisions as they think fit (see Simon, 1945). In the latter context, Ham and Hill (1993:155) argue that, “organisational or planning activities at the top of such hierarchies ... [will thus] ... set contexts for, but not necessarily predetermine, decision-making at field levels, where very different tasks ... [will be] ... performed and very different problems ... [will] ... be solved”.

Lipsky’s theory of street-level bureaucracy encapsulates this latter definition of discretion. It advocates that bureaucratic rules give specific functionaries to street-level bureaucrats to make individual decisions at the ground level (Lipsky, 1980). Thus, according to Lipsky, the majority of bureaucratic superiors provide the street-level bureaucrat with autonomous decision-making

powers. They recognise that the street-level bureaucrat must be given the power and freedom to make local level decisions if policies are to be efficiently and effectively implemented at the ground (see Wirth, 1986). This was clearly evident in the multitude of studies that have been conducted on the issue of police discretion, and, its benefits to the operation of the police force (e.g. Lambert, 1967; Wilson, 1970; Brown, 1981). Ham and Hill (1993:167) conclude that, “the fundamental reason for police discretion is that, were policemen to arrest all who break the law a gigantic police force would be necessary ... The police need, therefore, to choose where to operate, where they concentrate their attention and where efficiency ... is enhanced by turning a blind eye”.

As previously discussed, amongst those researchers who have adopted a bottom-up approach to policy implementation, it is generally advocated that given autonomous decision making powers, local-level implementers will seek to further their own policy interests and objectives (see Gouldner, 1954; Merton, 1957; Lewis and Flynn, 1979; Barrett and Fudge, 1981; Martins, 1986). Selznick (1957:7-8) argues, for example, that individual implementers will:

“... bring into play his [sic] own personality, his [sic] special problems and interests ... The persons and groups who make up ... [an organisation] ... are not content to be treated as manipulable or expendable. As human beings and not mere tools they have their own needs for self-protection and self-fulfilment - needs that may either sustain the formal system or undermine it”.

Lipsky recognises that the majority of street-level bureaucrats will enter employment with personal ideas, expectations and intentions of what they may achieve in terms of implementing public policy. Accordingly, Lipsky asserts that these interests may differ significantly from their bureaucratic superiors’ and from those interests held by other street-level bureaucrats operating within the same organisation. However, in terms of implementing these interests, Lipsky asserts that, in reality, the street-level bureaucrat will not be able to fulfil their individual intentions and objectives. As Hill (1993:379) stressed:

“the painful problem for street-level bureaucrats is that they enter employment with ideals which they cannot realise in practice. They do make policy, but not in the way they would really like to” (original emphasis).

Instead, Lipsky (1980:xii) argues that “the very nature of the street-level bureaucrat’s work prevents them from coming close to the ideal conception of their jobs. Large classes or huge caseloads and inadequate resources combine with the uncertainties of method and the unpredictability of ... [recipients of policy] ... to defeat their aspirations as service workers”. In this context, Lipsky asserts that street-level bureaucrats will use their discretionary freedom to develop and adopt different coping mechanisms that will enable them to implement policy efficiently and effectively within the constraints of their working environment. Thus, according to Hudson (1993: 387 & 397), “street-level bureaucrats are [not] simply malicious and cunning

functionaries interested only in their own comfort ... [rather] street-level bureaucrats end up making policy in circumstances which are not of their own choosing and which impel them to devise strategies to protect their working environment”.

Coping Strategies

In his book, titled ‘The Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy’, Lipsky (1980) discusses at length the various strategies chosen and developed by street-level bureaucrats in order to cope with the pressures they face in their day to day work. According to Lipsky, there are essentially three different groups of coping strategies that street-level bureaucrats adopt.

- i) Street-level bureaucrats will develop patterns of practice that limit demand, maximise the use of available resources and obtain client compliance.
- ii) Street-level bureaucrats will modify the conception of their role to fit in with available resources and achieving objectives.
- iii) Street-level bureaucrats will modify the conception of clients so as to make acceptable the gap between accomplishment and objectives (Lipsky, 1980).

In terms of rationing services, limiting demand and maximising the use of resources, Lipsky asserts that the street-level bureaucrat will adopt specific modes of demand control, such as perpetuating delays, withholding information and preferentially targeting recipients of policy. According to Lipsky (1980:44), the “fundamental service dilemma of street-level bureaucrats is how to provide individual responses or treatment on a mass basis”, especially where resources are limited. Faced with this dilemma, Lipsky asserts that street-level bureaucrats will often target specific recipients of policy who will respond more favourably to the policy than other individuals.

“Street-level bureaucrats often respond more favourably to clients who are helpful or co-operative on their own treatment, or who appear to be particularly responsive to help. Orienting services toward co-operative clients, or clients who respond to treatment, allows street-level bureaucrats to believe that they are optimising their use of resources” (Lipsky, 1980:152).

In doing so, Lipsky argues that street-level bureaucrats will control the content and quantity of information that recipients may receive. Those experiencing favouritism of the street-level bureaucrat will obtain “privileged information, permitting them to manipulate the system better than others” (Lipsky, 1980:90). While those not favoured by the street-level bureaucrat may receive information “as confusing jargon, elaborate procedures and arcane practices that act as barriers to understanding how to operate effectively within the system” (Lipsky, 1980:90). Further, Lipsky argues that the street-level bureaucrat may seek to limit the demand for their

services by preferential selection of recipients, based upon the bureaucrat's personal conception of the individual. As Lipsky (1980:109) argued:

" ... inequality and differentiation among clients may take place because of workers preferences for some clients over others. Some clients may simply evoke workers' sympathy or hostility, while biased behaviour can be evident where street-level bureaucrats respond to general orientations toward clients' worthiness or unworthiness that permeate the society and to whose proliferation they regularly contribute".

This was clearly evident in Cooper's (1985) study of social security officers in Britain where he found that the treatment of social security claimants by individual officers would vary greatly according to the officers' personal feelings towards the individual claimant. One example he drew upon highlighted the differential approaches experienced by two claimants when they were dealt with by the same social security officer. One claimant, a married man in his 50s, was evidently favoured by the officer.

"Mike [the officer] treated him very decently, asking after his and his wife's welfare, and thanking him pleasantly for the certificate" (Cooper, 1985 in Hudson, 1993:391).

The second claimant, on the other hand, evoked less sympathy with the officer and was evidently treated with less respect.

" ... Mike's [the officer] approach was abrupt. He wanted to know why Mr Z had come in. Mr Z. said he had been told to bring the documents. 'You must have heard wrong' said Mike. 'We tell people to post them in. Why don't you leave it with the man on reception?'. Mike took the papers and dismissed Mr Z, [afterwards] Mike remarked 'What do you make of that one? Bloody odd. The best thing you can do is get them in and get them out when they're like him ...'" (Cooper, 1985 in Hudson, 1993:391).

Operating in an environment typically constrained by socio-political and economic factors, Lipsky's street-level bureaucrats are additionally expected to modify and reconstruct their work objectives in order to match their ability to implement public policy (Lipsky, 1980; Hudson, 1993). In particular, Lipsky asserts that street-level bureaucrats will privately modify the extent to which they may possess and exercise autonomous decision making powers. Denying their discretionary freedom, street-level bureaucrats may, thus, limit their level of responsibility, and, in addition, provide the bureaucrat with a defence mechanism against recipients demanding the services of the street-level bureaucrat (Lipsky, 1980). Further, Lipsky asserts that, street-level bureaucrats will seek to limit their level of responsibility by specialising in one facet of their work where only a limited number of recipients will be involved. A classic example, as Lipsky (1981) outlines, is that of teachers, who by the very nature of their work specialise in one specific subject which may not be studied by all of the students attending the same school or college. According to Lipsky (1980:146), " ... specialisation permits street-level bureaucrats to reduce the strain that would otherwise complicate their work situation". Concomitantly, it enables the street-level bureaucrat to

maximise available resources and in turn implement policy as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Focusing upon his last group of coping strategies Lipsky asserts that, street-level bureaucrats will continue to adopt mechanisms to cope with work pressures and, in particular, to resolve the dilemma of 'processing' a large number of recipients (see Prottas, 1977). According to Lipsky, street-level bureaucrats will often modify their conception of policy target groups by prejudging the recipients and fitting them into stereotyped characterisations, as defined by both the street-level bureaucracy and by society at large (see Giller and Morris, 1981; Satyamurti, 1981). As Lipsky (1980:59) argues:

"people come to street-level bureaucrats as unique individuals with different life experiences, personalities and circumstances. In their encounters with bureaucracies they are transformed into clients, identifiably located in very small number of categories, treated as if they fit standardised definitions of units consigned to specific bureaucratic slots".

Central to Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy is the concept that the coping strategies adopted by street-level bureaucrats effectively become the public policies that are implemented at the ground level. As discussed, street-level bureaucrats will not seek to reformulate policy in order to selfishly advantage their own interests and objectives. Instead, Lipsky asserts that street-level bureaucrats will reformulate policy-maker objectives by developing methods to implement the policy within the constraints of their working environment. Thus, "although these routines and simplifications originate in the coping needs of individual workers, they nonetheless add up to street-level policy and they become the patterns of agency behaviour with which clients and policy formers must contend" (Lipsky, 1980:86).

Recipients of Policy

The coping strategies adopted by Lipsky's street-level bureaucrat tend to dis-empower and marginalise policy target groups from the implementation process. They are labelled and 'boxed' into stereotyped policy respondents, whose requirements and demands are constantly controlled by the individual street-level bureaucrat. Indeed, throughout Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy, recipients of policy are considered to be relatively powerless actors. They are believed to possess weaker tactics to respond to street-level bureaucrats' coping mechanisms, which manipulate and control policy target groups. This has been supported by Hasenfeld and Steinmetz (1981) who argue that, "the power advantage [street-level bureaucracies] have, enables them to exercise considerable control over the lives of the recipients of their services ... clients have to wait for help, experience 'status' degradation, have problems in securing access to information and are taught ways to behave".

Lipsky went on to assert that, recipients of policy have little control and influence over the role of the street-level bureaucrat. "They do not count among the groups that primarily define street-level bureaucrat's roles" (Lipsky, 1980:48). Rather, peer groups and professionally related standards are believed to be more significant in terms of influencing and determining street-level bureaucratic behaviour (Lipsky, 1980). However, if Lipsky's claims to the professional status of street-level bureaucrats is to be upheld, Ham and Hill (1993) argue that analysts applying Lipsky's theory must recognise that recipients of policy, and the public at large, possess a relative degree of authority in sanctioning the professionalism of the street-level bureaucrat. According to Ham and Hill (1993:147), "professional status cannot simply be won ... by becoming more expert and devising an ethical code. It depends upon the delegation of power, and, on the legitimisation process in society". Using the British medical profession as an exemplar, they argue that the power, autonomy and prestige currently enjoyed by doctors, surgeons and healthcare workers, is, in part, due to societies fears of illness, and the expertise which medical workers possess to assist the public in overcoming ill health (Ham and Hill, 1993).

According to Lipsky, however, recipients of policy remain dependent upon the individual 'street-level' professional for information and advice concerning those policies that seek to impinge upon their everyday lives. According to Lipsky, the public view the street-level bureaucrat as a 'friendly' extension of government who may assist them in interpreting and implementing public policy. Further, Lipsky (1980:11) asserts that, "as individuals, street-level bureaucrats represent the hopes of citizens for fair and effective treatment by government". Thus, for recipients of public policy the street-level bureaucrat is an important and eminent actor within their implementation network.

Mediators of a Bottom-Up Approach to Policy

Concomitantly, Prottas (1977) and Lipsky (1980) discuss the powerful position that street-level bureaucrats hold within the policy networks of their bureaucratic superiors. As discussed, policy makers are highly dependent on the street-level bureaucrat to deliver policy objectives as efficiently and effectively as possible. They permit the street-level bureaucrat sufficient flexibility to assist them in their work and, in addition, they trust in the professionalism of the individual bureaucrat to implement the policies in the locality.

Further, Lipsky argues that where street-level bureaucrats dominate and control recipients knowledge of policy objectives, they, in turn, control the content and quantity of information that policy makers may receive. Often, policy makers require knowledge of local-level action in order to assist in the revision and formulation of further policies. Operating at the ground level environment and in direct contact with recipients of policy, Lipsky asserts that, it is

invariably the street-level bureaucrat who has access to such information. In this context, Lipsky goes on to argue that the street-level bureaucrat may firstly influence the quantify of information received by policy makers, and, secondly, through personal interpretation they may determine the content of information transferred through this bottom-up approach to policy.

In summary, Lipsky offers a theoretical framework to analyse local-level implementers which places the street-level bureaucrat at the heart of influencing and determining the outcome of policy (Fig. 2.2). He asserts that, given considerable levels of autonomy, street-level bureaucrats will adopt a variety of coping mechanisms, reformulating policy in order to implement a service within the constraints of their working environment. Further, Lipsky argues that the individual street-level bureaucrat has monopolistic control over the content and quantity of information received by policy makers and recipients of policy. In short, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy maintains that the decisions and actions of the street-level bureaucrat will determine policy.

2.5 Conclusion

As this chapter has sought to outline, the street-level bureaucrat has emerged, conceptually, as a powerful policy actor whose decisions and actions are believed to have considerable influence on the implementation and outcome of policy. Where previously analysts sought to understand policy implementation in accordance with a rational top-down model, it is generally accepted that if policy implementation is to be understood, the role and activities of local-level implementers must be analysed. To facilitate such research, it is evident that Michael Lipsky (1980) has developed a universal theory of street-level bureaucracy where he outlines the behavioural characteristics and social relations that can be expected from any one local-level implementer. Despite its detailed exposition of the role and activities of the local-level implementer, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy has had a relatively muted impact on contemporary policy studies. In Britain, no known attempt has of yet been made to explicitly apply Lipsky's theory. According to Hudson (1993), however, it is evident that in a number of policy studies, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy has, inadvertently, been supported in empirical analyses of specific local-level implementers. Hudson (1993) outlines, for example, that in her study of British social work Carol Satyamurti (1981) indirectly describes Lipsky's conception of the coping strategies adopted by the street-level bureaucrat. According to Hudson (1993:390), "Satyamurti cites the way in which social workers encouraged dependent behaviour in their clients, the way in which social workers treated appointments and called without warning on clients, the terms in which social workers discussed clients and the

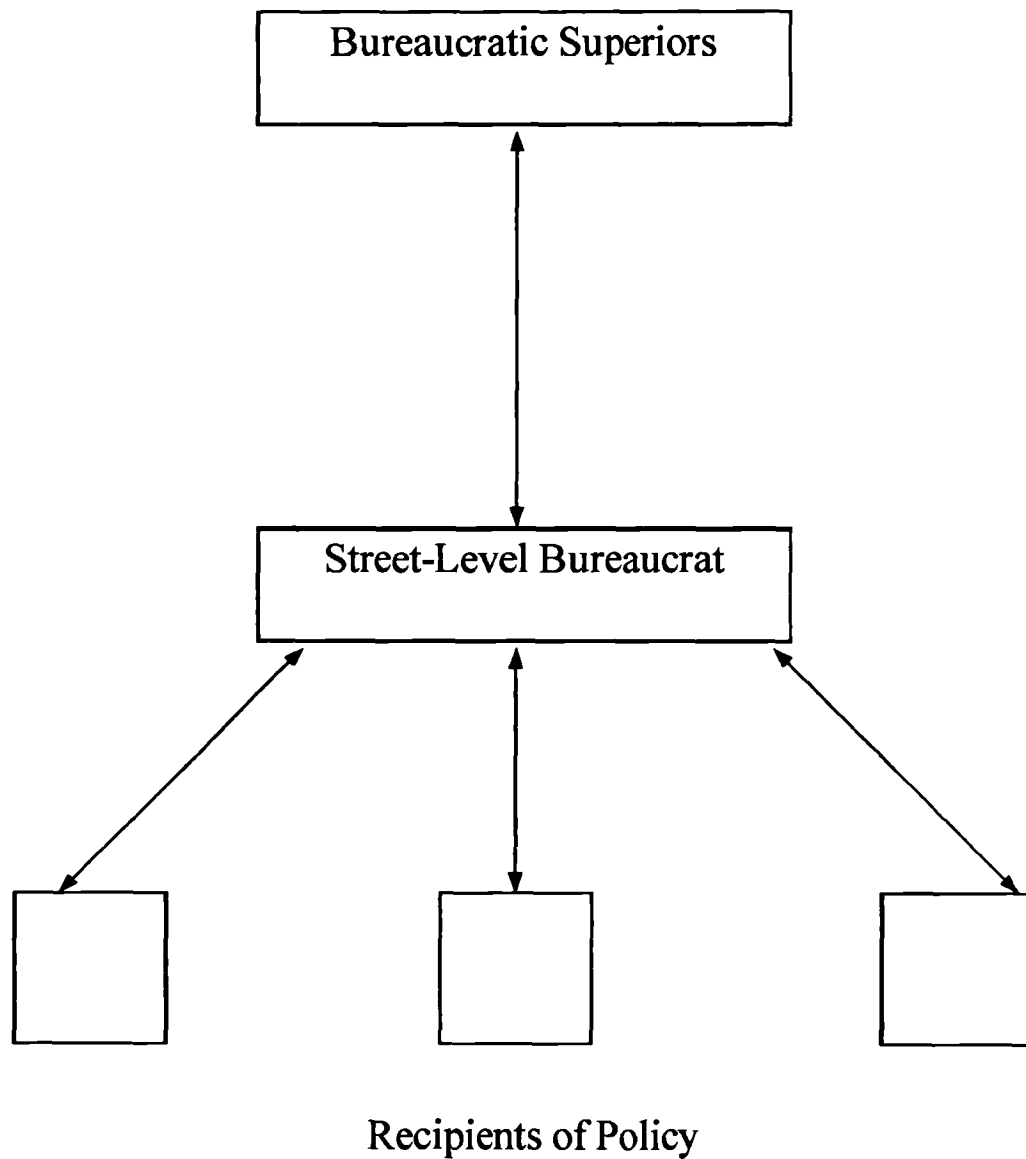


Fig. 2.2 Schematic Representation of Lipsky's Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy
(Source: Developed from Lipsky, 1980)

assumptions they made about client ‘irresponsibility’”. Further, Hudson (1993) has drawn upon Cornwell’s (1987) work on the UK’s 1981 Education Act to illustrate how Cornwell has supported Lipsky’s theory by revealing details of the *modus operandi* of educational officers that correspond with Lipsky’s street-level bureaucrat. In fact, there appears to be a considerable number of policy studies that indirectly reflect and support Lipsky’s theory of street-level bureaucracy. As discussed, Cooper’s (1985) study of social security officers in Britain support the strategy of favouritism often adopted by street-level bureaucrats when dealing with large groups of policy recipients (see section 2.4). Ham and Hill (1993) draw attention to the need for discretion amongst police officers, while Hasenfeld and Steintmetz (1981) support Lipsky’s theory by revealing that recipients of policy have relatively little power in the policy implementation process (see section 2.4).

However, while the central concepts of Lipsky’s theory of street-level bureaucracy appear to be replicated in a number of policy studies, the primary question pertinent to the aims of this thesis is, how useful and applicable is Lipsky’s theory in understanding the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer? As the following chapter turns to the agri-environmental context of the research this question will be analysed.

Chapter 3

A New Conceptualisation of Street-Level Bureaucrats? The Case of the Agri-Environmental Implementer

3.1 Introduction

Having discussed, in chapter 2, the conceptualisation of the street-level bureaucrat as a powerful and influential policy actor, this chapter seeks to place the conceptual and theoretical debate within the agri-environmental context of this research. In particular, attention is paid to the applicability of Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy as an appropriate theoretical framework in which to situate an analysis of the role and influence of the UK's agri-environmental implementer. First, drawing upon agricultural extension science and historical accounts of the UK's post-war agricultural development strategy, the chapter provides an initial exploration of the role and influence of the FRCA PO. The motives behind the decision to employ agri-environmental implementers are examined, as are current assertions that the FRCA PO is one of the most important and powerful actors influencing the outcome and 'success' of the UK's voluntary agri-environmental schemes. As the chapter goes on to reveal, however, the role and influence of the individual FRCA PO is brought into question as previous research studies have identified a complex network of actors who operate alongside the PO and effectively influence the agri-environmental implementation process. In this context, it is argued that to analyse the role and relative influence of the PO in relation to all agri-environmental actors, a new conceptualisation of the local-level implementer is needed as Lipsky's micro-sociological theory can not provide a holistic analytical framework in which to situate this research. Following analysis of political-economy theories and Giddens' theory of Structuration, it is concluded that an examination of the role and influence of the FRCA PO may be more revealing if situated within the conceptual and methodological framework advocated by actor-network theorists.

3.2 A Role for the Agri-Environmental Implementer

Since the evolution of agri-environmental concerns and practices, it has been widely acknowledged amongst academics and policy makers that, following forty years of productivist policies, educational and advisory mechanisms have a central role to play in informing and persuading farmers to adopt nature conservation practices and, where eligible, to participate in the voluntary agri-environmental schemes that are currently on offer to a large proportion of

the UK's farming community (Cox et al., 1985a, 1985b; Blunden and Curry, 1988; Eldon, 1988; Clark and O'Riordan, 1989; RSPB, 1996). In his 1984 review of the government's advisory service - the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) - Professor R.L. Bell asserted that, in addition to adopting a marketing approach and charging their customers for advice, ADAS should seek to provide free environmental advice in order to assist farmers to adjust to the burgeoning post-productivist political philosophy (MAFF, 1984). This was further emphasised by a House of Commons Agricultural Committee in 1985, who asserted that, " ... the advisory services ... must be ready to respond on such issues as the maintenance of rural landscapes, the conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitats and the avoidance of pollution to the air or water courses" (House of Commons, 1985: para 41: xv). More recently, Mitchell and Baldock (1996:1) have reasserted that:

"as environmental concerns arising from modern farming practices have gained greater prominence, with a corresponding increase in environmental obligations and incentives: the need for environmental and nature conservation advice has grown. Advisory services therefore have a role to play for promoting awareness of environmental issues generally and the practical implementation of environmental policy measures, thereby maximising their effectiveness".

Conceptually, the need for advice and information throughout periods of agricultural innovation and development has been addressed by many agricultural researchers within the developed and developing worlds (Byerlee, 1988; Davies, 1988; Roling, 1988). In the classic innovation-adoption model, which dominated agricultural research studies in the 1950s and 1970s, it was recognised that following the introduction of a 'new' innovation, and, during the early periods of its adoption, "persuasive, timely information and advice" (Buttall et al., 1990:3), would play an important role in the future success of an innovation, whether that be a new policy or technology (Rogers, 1958; Jones, 1963; Ilbery, 1985). Further, the development of 'agricultural extension science' as an academic discipline (see Roling, 1988, Cary, 1993), conceptualised the dissemination of agricultural advice, taking as a central premise the notion that "advice is a necessary prerequisite to widespread and sustained agricultural development" (Benor et al., 1984:5). According to agricultural extension scientists, such as Byerlee (1988:14), "inadequate technical knowledge ... limits farmers' ability to exploit [new] opportunities to improve economic efficiency". Accordingly, the key to agricultural development is believed to be the dissemination of advice and information related directly to research institutes, whereby farmers may keep abreast of new political and technological developments and, in turn, advance their agricultural systems in line with contemporary policies and market forces. In the absence of advice, extension scientists assert that many new agricultural policies and techniques may 'never get off the starting blocks'. Research results and new agricultural technologies need to be brought to the farmers. "Someone must teach farmers how these practices should be employed and adopted under their own individual farming and resource conditions" (Benor et al., 1984:7).

Early on in the development of agri-environmental conservation a number of researchers suggested that individual on-farm conservation advisors may have a central role to play in shaping the agri-environmental knowledge capacities and decision making strategies of individual farmers. In their celebrated study of New Agricultural Landscapes, Westmacott and Worthington (1974:87) asserted, for example, that with the introduction of new agri-environmental policies a key role could be played by an “enthusiastic and competent officer who could inform, demonstrate and advise on conservation activities”. This was further supported by Clark and O’Riordan (1989:33) who argued that:

“obviously no two farms, nor two farmers are alike and it is therefore difficult, not to say undesirable, to contact farmers solely through mass media. Direct face to face, and approaches of adviser to land manager are vital ... if truly worthwhile farm-conservation investment programmes are to emerge throughout the UK. Advisers should remain the main filters and communicators for farm conservation work”.

Throughout agricultural extension studies the individual on-farm advisor has been regarded as an important and influential actor in the development and implementation of new agricultural policies. Emulating many of the concepts encapsulated in Lipsky’s theory of street-level bureaucracy, agricultural extension scientists assert that individual advisors entrusted with implementing state agricultural policies occupy a powerful and influential position within the policy implementation process (Singh, 1981; Jones and Rolls, 1982; Benor et al., 1984). Acting as a link between agricultural policy makers, research and development institutes, and farming communities, Roling (1988:272) asserts that the advisory officer may act as an agent of change, or, “like a dart gun, which shoots knowledge and motivation darts into ‘target’ clients ... ‘transferring’ knowledge” from policy makers down to the farming communities (Fig. 3.1). In this context, van den Ban and Hawkins (1988) argue that the individual officer may greatly assist policy makers in ensuring that their objectives are implemented at the ground level. Operating at the ground level environment, they may offer farmers information, advice and possible strategies in which to integrate new policies and technologies into their individual farm management plans.

Moreover, Albrecht (1982) is keen to stress that in the dissemination of advice and information the individual advisor may act as a facilitator to a two-way process of communication. Rather than information being simply transported down to the farming community, farmers may in turn discuss their problems and objectives with the officer, in the hope that these may then be transferred back to agricultural policy makers. This is further supported by other agricultural extension scientists who argue that individual on-farm advisors should always respect farmers autonomous decision making powers (Singh, 1981; Giles, 1983; Roling, 1993). They should seek to enter into consultation with the farmer, discussing their aims and objectives, and then drawing upon their own knowledge and experience to suggest appropriate strategies that the

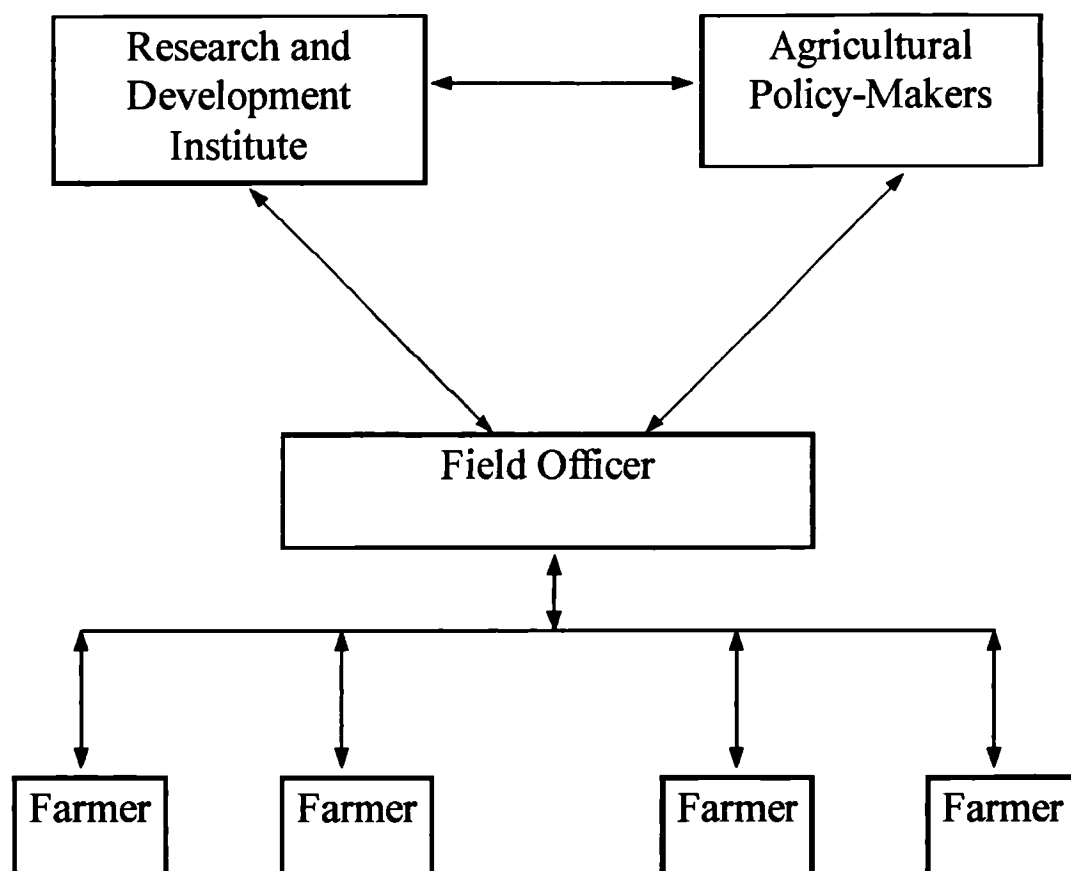


Fig. 3.1 The Flow of Information in Agricultural Extension Science
(Source: Adapted from Benor et al., 1984)

farmer may adopt in order to adjust to external pressures. Giles (1983) goes as far as to argue that when giving agricultural advice, the individual officer should attempt to place himself/herself in the shoes of the farmer - a task which is believed to be greatly facilitated if the advisor possesses an intimate knowledge of farming practices (see also Dalton, 1980). In doing so, Giles (1983:324) asserts that on-farm advisors may personally gain enriched experience and knowledge “by listening to and talking to those in the industry who accept the risks and take the decisions”. According to Singh (1981), knowledge of farmers’ attitudes and experiences may then be transferred by the advisor back to policy makers and research institutes, where they may be integrated into future agricultural policies and technologies. In this context, Scoones and Thompson (1994) argue that the individual advisory officer occupies a powerful position as the purveyor of ‘new’ knowledge for both farmers and policy makers. They exist at the centre of the advisory process where they may greatly facilitate agricultural change and assist in the development of future policies (Crouch and Chamala, 1981).

The FRCA PO

Recognising that on-farm advisors have a potentially beneficial role to play in assisting policy-makers and farmers to implement new policies, MAFF has employed individual advisors, or project officers (POs) as they are officially termed, to implement a number of the UK’s voluntary agri-environmental schemes. Operating at the ground level environment and in direct contact with the farming community, the POs are expected to promote and market MAFF’s voluntary agri-environmental schemes, to encourage farmer participation and, following this, to manage the schemes on behalf of MAFF by advising agreement holders on how they may implement and adhere to MAFF’s policy rules and objectives (MAFF, 1995).

Prior to 1997, these POs were employed within MAFF’s own advisory service - ADAS. They operated alongside general on-farm conservation advisors situated within ADAS’ Farm and Countryside Service, where they sought to work directly under the auspices of agricultural policy makers, and under the name of ‘ADAS Project Officers’. In 1992, ADAS took its first steps towards privatisation as Ministers established the advisory service as a ‘Next Steps Executive Agency’. In doing so, ADAS took over their own budgetary responsibilities from MAFF and sought to provide fee-paying services to the government as well as to the private sector, which it had been serving since charges were introduced in 1987. These services included:

- “a) the supply of consultancy, advisory and information services:
 - i) to government, providing up-to-date technical intelligence and advice;
 - ii) on behalf of the government, furnishing general advice to the agricultural community as required by the Departments;
 - iii) to private or public sector clients on a fee paying basis;

- b) the provision of research and development services to government, the levy-raising bodies and the agricultural and related industries;
- c) the conduct of statutory and regulatory work of government” (ADAS, 1992:3).

On the 1st April, 1997, ADAS became a fully privatised agricultural advisory company, and in its place a new Executive agency was established by Ministers - The Farming and Rural Conservancy Agency (FRCA). The FRCA now has the full responsibility for implementing MAFF’s voluntary agri-environmental schemes. As Tim Boswell, the Minister for Rural Affairs asserted:

“The establishment of the FRCA as a separate agency will enable it to concentrate on delivery of services to the government, leading to efficiencies and improvement in technical administration of agri-environmental schemes” (MAFF, 1996b:1).

Its remit is to carry on the statutory work that was carried out by ADAS, in particular:

- “ to provide professional and scientific advice on policy issues relating to agriculture and the environment;
- provide professional services required to administer European Union and National agri-environmental schemes - particularly the Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme, Countryside Stewardship and the Nitrate Sensitive Areas Scheme;
- provide, on behalf of MAFF and Welsh Office, advice on development plans, strategies and major individual planning application to ensure that the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land is kept to a minimum, and that a positive approach is taken on proposal to diversify the rural economy;
- enforce, on behalf of MAFF and the Welsh Office, certain aspects of Dairy Hygiene Regulations” (MAFF, 1996b:1-2).

Throughout all of these administrative changes, the individual PO continued to be employed as implementers of MAFF’s voluntary agri-environmental schemes. Although they currently operate under their new title as ‘FRCA POs’, MAFF assert that their role has not changed dramatically since they first began to implement the schemes, in 1987 (MAFF, 1996b).

Since the development of UK agri-environmental schemes, MAFF has placed considerable emphasis on the role and importance of the PO. A large proportion of MAFF’s agri-environmental budget has been invested in the administration of the schemes and, in particular, in employing the FRCA POs. Looking at the annual budget for ESAs in England, for example (Table 3.1), it can be seen that on average 90 per cent of the total running costs are made in payments to the FRCA POs whereas only 10 per cent of the administrative costs go to MAFF Regional Service Centres who are responsible for processing applications and administering payments to farmers (see Chapter 5).

	1994/95 (Actual)	1995/96 (Actual)	1996/97 (Estimate)	1997/98 (Provision)	1998/99 (Provision)
Total Running Costs	7124	7053	5729	5652	5616
Of Which RSC Costs	1279	1383	1187	1187	1144
Of Which Payments to FRCA	5519	5447	4305	4169	4169

Table 3.1. Annual Administrative Costs of ESAs in England, in £'000 (Source: MAFF, 1996a:15).

Although PO run schemes are considerably more expensive to administer than other agri-environmental schemes, such as the Organic Aid Scheme which does not employ FRCA POs (Table 3.2), MAFF (1996a) has asserted that their investment has brought fortune and success to the development of UK agri-environmental policy. One senior MAFF official has gone as far as to argue that:

"... these officers have proved to be the key to the whole ... [agri-environmental] ... system. They have undertaken their work with great vigour and vision and without their dedication the ... [agri-environmental schemes] ... would not have achieved the success which they have" (Smith, 1989:35).

	1994/95 (Actual)	1995/96 (Actual)	1996/97 (Estimate)	1997/98 (Provision)	1998/99 (Provision)
Total Running Costs:	97	130	127	129	129
Of Which RSC Costs	42	74	66	67	67
Of Which Payments to FRCA	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3.2. Annual Administrative Costs of the Organic Aid Scheme in England, in £'000 (Source: MAFF, 1996a:39).

In an industry where farmers are becoming increasingly regulated by external socio-economic and political forces (see section 3.4.2), the FRCA PO is believed to provide one of the few remaining paternal relationships that exist between rural producers and state policy makers. According to an official from the FRCA, the POs assist farmers by making the schemes more user-friendly. He argues that "it is difficult, if not impossible, to manage land in accordance with a set of rigid rules and without help and advice. ... [However] ... the project officer provides that advice to agreement holders when needed ... and generally makes the scheme[s] user-friendly" (Grimble, 1993:67). Further, reflecting the arguments of Lipsky (1980) and agricultural extension scientists, MAFF (1995) assert that, by acting as a link between farmers and policy makers, the POs may assist farmers in implementing national agri-environmental objectives, while, additionally, providing advice and information to MAFF on how well their

schemes are being received and implemented by the farming community. In this context, MAFF (1996a) insists that if agri-environmental objectives are to be successfully implemented by farmers and landowners financial incentives alone are not enough. Farmers need advice and assistance to implement the agri-environmental schemes in relation to their individual farm holding. MAFF (1996a) insist that the FRCA PO provides this crucial implementory and advisory role, within which they greatly influence the outcome and success of UK agri-environmental schemes. As they assert, “the role of the PO is vital to the success of the [agri-environmental] policy” (MAFF, 1995: Annex P, para. 3). But what evidence is there to support MAFF’s claims? Has MAFF invested wisely? Is the individual FRCA PO key to the ‘successful’ implementation of UK agri-environmental schemes?

3.3 Supporters of the Agri-Environmental Implementer

Historically, it is evident that state agricultural advisors and policy implementers have taken a lead role in implementing new policies and assisting farmers to adjust to changes in political and economic objectives. Following the outbreak of war in 1939, County War Agricultural Executive Committees (CWAECs) were appointed directly by the government to identify and organise the cultivation of millions of acres of under utilised farmland, in a quest to promote and secure an adequate level of self-sufficiency during the war years. In doing so, the committees were placed in charge of implementing a basic state support system through which farmers could receive financial grants and agricultural inputs, in the form of fertilisers, labour and machinery (Self and Storing, 1962; Cox et al., 1987; Winter, 1995, 1996). In addition, the CWAECs established further Technical Development Committees to provide advice at the local level through individual state advisors who would seek to inform farmers on how they may improve the efficiency and output of their individual farm holdings. As early predecessors to the FRCA PO, the Technical Development Committee advisors arranged practical demonstrations and farm walks, in addition to producing instruction leaflets that promoted new techniques, the use of better seed varieties, more efficient weed control and various cultivation methods (Dancey, 1993; Winter, 1995).

The advisory and implementory role of the CWAECs proved to be highly successful. Within the first two years of the Second World War the annual income of the average British farmer had risen rapidly, productivity levels had increased and hitherto abandoned farmland had been brought into cultivation (Foreman, 1989; Gardner, 1996). Wishing to maintain such a healthy and well balanced agricultural industry in the years following the Second World War the government, in 1946 established a National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAAS) which became empowered to provide free technical advice to all farmers and landowners engaged in commercial agricultural and horticultural production. As a state *advisory* service, NAAS

initially had little responsibility for the implementation of statutory agricultural policies. It was promoted as a service dedicated to the interests and needs of farmers, which was strengthened by their close alliance with County Agricultural Executive Committees (CAECs). These committees were comprised of farmers appointed by the Ministry from nominees of the NFU (Cox et al., 1985a; Winter, 1985, 1995). Adopting an agricultural extension role, NAAS sought to act as an intermediary agency, transferring information and advice concerning productive farming practices, from their own experimental farms and horticultural stations down to the UK's farming community. In order to facilitate this role, NAAS was organised into eight regions with an administrative structure that consisted of an overall director, regional directors, county officials and district advisers. Based alongside MAFF headquarters in Whitehall, the director of NAAS, along with other senior staff sought to oversee the administration of the national advisory service. Within each of the eight regions, a regional director co-ordinated and controlled county staff, along with groups of regional scientists operating within laboratories to develop new agro-technologies that would help to increase productivity. At the county level, a county officer was then present to manage a cadre of husbandry specialists, and district advisory officers who lived and worked in the local farming communities (Dancey, 1993).

As a predecessor of the contemporary agri-environmental implementer, it was the duty of the district advisory officer (DAO) to operate at the ground level environment and, in direct contact with the farming community, to provide advice and information on all aspects of agricultural production and government policy. Many of these 'front line' workers had worked as technical officers under the CWAECs. They possessed reasonable knowledge and experience of agricultural issues and had often established strong links with farming communities through their work in the war committees, and later in association with the CAECs. Indeed, such was their alliance to farmers and landowners that many DAOs regarded themselves as 'servants' of the farming community rather than of the state (Winter, 1995).

Assisting farmers to increase agricultural production the DAOs sought to employ a variety of extension methodologies in which to transfer new knowledge and information concerning 'good farming practices'. They would conduct farm walks, arrange meetings with groups of local farmers, conduct lectures on new technologies and lay down demonstration plots to test the applicability of new techniques within the locality (Dancey, 1993). In addition, they would visit individual farmers, providing specific advice on productive techniques and assisting the farmers in their applications for state agricultural improvement grants (Foreman, 1989). Deciding which of these methodologies to use, where and when, was, like Lipsky's street-level bureaucrat, often left to the decision of the individual DAO (Dancey, 1983). According to Roling (1988), specific circumstances may warrant a specific method of communication, and thus, bureaucratic superiors should provide the advisor with a certain degree of freedom in which to choose an appropriate methodology that would facilitate the effective dissemination

of advice. According to Dancey (1993), the Director of NAAS provided broad general directions on how the DAOs should advise farming communities, but it was evident that these were then adapted by the DAO to suit local conditions and individual circumstances. In this context, the DAO was able to exert a relatively high degree of autonomy in the dissemination of advice and information. MAFF and senior NAAS officials expressed confidence in the professionalism of the individual district officer and asserted that the individual officer must be given sufficient freedom in which to develop their own ideas, and to utilise their knowledge and experience to solve problems within the locality. One senior NAAS official asserted, for example, that:

“whilst standardisation is desirable we do not wish to stifle initiative. The art of leadership lies in outlining the overall objectives and policy, and then allowing the individual officer sufficient scope to develop his [sic] own ideas. These two requirements, i.e. co-ordination and individual initiative, have to be balanced if an effective [advisory] service is to be maintained” (Davies, 1966:155).

Given a relative degree of discretionary freedom, the decisions and actions of the DAO were believed to have considerable influence on the expansion of UK agricultural production. According to Dancey (1993:379), “the district officer was the kingpin of the [advisory] service and by his [sic] efforts the NAAS flourished and became a potent force for change within the industry, highly valued for its independent, impartial advice to the individual producer, unbiased by any external pressure either from Government or commercial interests”. Even when NAAS was forced to adjust to external political and market forces in the late 1950s, and re-orientate their services to the provision of greater economic advice, the DAO continued to be employed and advocated as a key actor within the national advisory service. Indeed, Ministers and senior civil servants reaffirmed their commitment to the employment of DAOs by investing in retraining programmes for the officers, to enable them to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to guide the agricultural industry into the next political and economic period of growth (Holmes, 1988; Davies, 1988).

Towards the late 1960s and early 1970s, the UK’s agricultural industry, with help from the newly trained NAAS DAOs had responded positively to political objectives, increasing the level of efficiency throughout the industry (Smith, 1990; Winter, 1996). In doing so, the shape of British farming changed. Many farms were amalgamated forming larger, more dominant capitalistic agricultural businesses. Where smaller, family farms remained, producers became caught on a technological treadmill where to survive they were forced to adopt intensive agricultural technologies, increasing agro-chemical inputs and creating a monocultural landscape (Blunden and Curry, 1988; Foreman, 1989; Harvey, 1996). As the UK’s agricultural industry became more specialised and capital-intensive NAAS responded accordingly. The general practitioner role of the DAO closely aligned to the farming community retracted. The officers were required to provide more specialist advice and to take on greater responsibility

for implementing statutory regulations and grants, which encouraged greater agricultural efficiency and specialisation (Dancey, 1993).

As Britain moved towards membership of the European Community (EC) in 1973, NAAS underwent major structural readjustment. Throughout its twenty five year life NAAS had met public and political demands by assisting farmers in increasing agricultural productivity and efficiency. However, in doing so, NAAS helped to create an agricultural industry dependent upon the financial and advisory support of the government which, in 1971, came under increasing pressure during a period of reduced government intervention and public expenditure (Dancey, 1993; Winter, 1996). Although NAAS was the primary extension service within MAFF there were other agencies within the government that also provided advice to the agricultural industry. The Agricultural Land Service provided advice to landowners on estate management and the modernisation of building and equipment (see Jones, 1963). The Field Drainage and Water Supply Service was primarily engaged in land improvement work and farm drainage, while the Veterinary Investigation Service provided advice to local veterinarians as well as undertaking animal health investigations (Dancey, 1993). Wishing to maintain an active role in the agricultural industry, the UK government decided that in light of reduced public expenditure NAAS should be amalgamated with these three other services so as to form “a comprehensive, unified national service capable of integrating its various skills and deploying its resources flexibly and efficiently to meet changing needs” (MAFF, 1971 in Dancey, 1993:380). In 1971 ADAS was established. This new agency was to continue to provide advice to the agricultural industry on all matters of agricultural production, in addition to furthering its commitment to implementing statutory agricultural policies.

Within the newly formed ADAS, the DAO continued to operate at the ground level environment and be used as a purveyor of ‘new’ knowledge and policy for both the government and farming communities. Operating as part of a bureaucratic organisation, however, the DAO became subjected to some of the wider political and economic changes that were occurring in the government and agricultural industry during the early 1970s. Primarily, in the light of government cutbacks and rationalisation, the DAOs were forced to change their role as implementers and facilitators of new agricultural objectives. The number of visits made to farms were reduced and farmers were expected to seek out the ADAS officer when and where advice was required (Winter, 1995). Despite such changes, however, the DAO remained as a central component of the state agricultural advisory service. Since the Second World War they had ‘held the hands’ of farmers throughout an unprecedented agricultural revolution, steering them through previously uncharted waters and ensuring that they were equipped with the knowledge and skills to implement policy maker objectives. Further, as the UK entered the EC in 1973, the government continued to promote and utilise the DAO as an important and influential policy actor. Fuelled by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) the

UK government offered farmers grants for farm development, improvements to fixed equipment, machinery and stock purchase. ADAS took on the duty of administering these grants and it was recognised that with their experience and innate knowledge of farming communities the DAOs would be best placed to take on the responsibility of promoting the statutory schemes at the individual farm level, and providing advice to those farmers wishing to take advantage of the financial incentives on offer. Indeed, such was their apparent success as policy implementers that by 1979 43% of ADAS staff resources were devoted to statutory and scheme work, compared to only 35% in research and development and 17% providing general agricultural advice (Dancey, 1993).

As ADAS DAOs entered into the 1980s, their role as statutory policy implementers continued to grow in importance as they became entrusted to provide environmental advice and to implement the government's new voluntary agri-environmental schemes. Since then, as discussed, the FRCA project officer has risen in the minds of policy makers to an unprecedented level of power and influence in the contemporary agri-environmental implementation process. Emulating their predecessors within NAAS and the former public ADAS, it is believed that the contemporary FRCA PO is the 'kingpin' of the agri-environmental schemes.

Contemporary Supporters of the FRCA PO

Supporting MAFF's arguments (see section 3.2), a number of commentators have asserted that, like the DAO, the FRCA PO is a highly influential actor in the development of the UK's agri-environmental schemes. In their evidence to the recent Agriculture Select Committee enquiry on 'ESAs and other UK agri-environmental schemes', the National Farmers Union (NFU) argued that:

"the accessibility of the project officers and their local understanding of and familiarity with local farming practices has enabled the individual officer to change farmers' opinions towards the agri-environmental schemes from one of scepticism to enthusiasm" (NFU, 1996:3).

This was further supported by English Nature (EN) (1996) who argued, with specific reference to the ESA scheme, that:

"The knowledge of project officers is crucial to the success of ESAs in achieving environmental objectives" (English Nature, 1996:14).

According to the National Trust (1996), MAFF has invested their agri-environmental budget wisely. In their evidence to the Agriculture Select Committee they argued that:

“Agri-environmental schemes have been criticised as being costly to administer, but we believe that a clear distinction should be made between the cost of advice and administration. Much of the cost is represented by the employment of project officers who should be seen as facilitators of change rather than as administrators. Their role is vital to change cultures and attitudes as well as to provide detailed on-farm advice on environmental management. Without good advice, there is a danger that substantial payments will be made to farmers without achieving the desired environmental objectives” (National Trust, 1996:3).

Drawing on the historical experience of NAAS and ADAS DAOs, the National Trust (1996) went on to assert that:

“the Trust considers the post-war agricultural revolution to have been brought about by a combination of financial incentives, stable market prices and a highly effective advisory service. Consequently, should a similar environmental revolution be required, it will not be achieved through the use of financial incentives in isolation” (National Trust, 1996:3).

3.4 Questioning the Role and Influence of the Agri-Environmental Implementer

Despite such profound support for MAFF and the agri-environmental POs, the precise level of power and influence that the FRCA PO exerts over the agri-environmental implementation process is clearly open to question. Since the development of the UK’s agri-environmental policy, a number of researchers have begun to identify a complex network of actors which, along with the FRCA PO, are actively involved in implementing and influencing the outcome of the voluntary agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales. This is not to say that a network of agri-environmental actors is now complete, indeed research is continuously being conducted on factors influencing the implementation and effectiveness of agri-environmental policies. However, as the following sections will outline, these empirical studies bring into question MAFF’s assertions concerning the power and influence of the FRCA PO, concluding that if the importance and influence of the PO is to be established analysis needs to ensure that the FRCA PO is examined in relation to the complex network of actors involved in the agri-environmental policy process.

3.4.1 Recipients of Policy - The Power of Farmers

“In examining networks of knowledge, farmers should be seen as more than mere participants. They operate with their own ‘knowledge’ of environmental matters and their interpretations of the advice and information they receive are shaped by their own perceptions of the natural world” (Winter, 1995:11).

Throughout the history of agricultural policies farmers have been recognised as powerful autonomous policy actors whose decisions, either individually or collectively - as represented

by the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and Country Landowners Association (CLA) - have had profound effects on the shape and future direction of policy maker objectives. In the development of the UK's post-war price support system, for example, it is widely acknowledged that the farming lobby abandoned its old cautious policy of 'defence not defiance' (Self and Storing, 1962:46), and entered into a tightly knit corporatist relationship with MAFF, where the NFU successfully negotiated and secured the financial interests of farmers in return for guaranteed compliance to policy maker objectives (Metcalf and McQuillan, 1979; Marsh, 1983; Cox et al., 1985a, 1986, 1987; Smith, 1990). Forging closer links with the Ministry of Agriculture, the NFU continued to ensure that they were accorded a key mediating role in the agricultural policy community, whereupon they sought to ensure that their members interests were foremost in the objectives and directives of future productivist policies. In 1947, for example, the Town and Country Planning Act was passed by Parliament with a primary aim of securing farmers' rights to pre-emptive claims over the use of rural land for whatever agricultural and forestry practices they deemed suitable and/or desirable. This was subsequently complemented by the 1948 Agricultural Holdings Act which sought to secure the property rights of farmers throughout the UK (Marsden et al., 1993).

As the era of productivism gave way to environmental concerns and policies, the NFU and CLA continued to draw upon their post-war corporatist relations with MAFF, and successfully negotiated the introduction of agri-environmental schemes that promoted the principle of voluntarism and, thus, secured autonomous decision making powers for the farming community (Adams, 1993; Winter, 1996). In seeking to analyse the implementation and effectiveness of contemporary agri-environmental policy, therefore, it is acknowledged that as a basic premise to any analysis researchers must accept that, as autonomous decision makers, farmers are powerful recipients of policy who through their decisions to participate or not participate in a voluntary agri-environmental scheme may greatly influence the outcome and success of agri-environmental policy objectives (Brotherton, 1989; Wilson, 1996, 1997).

According to Long (1984, 1992), however, this conception of policy recipients as powerful and influential actors is not simply limited to policies that advocate principles of voluntarism. In his analysis of 'encounters at the interface', Long (1992) asserts that recipients of any policy will not always readily accept the dictates of policy makers as expressed in the policies implemented by street-level bureaucrats. He argues that through negotiations with local-level implementers, recipients of policy may interpret and redefine ministerial objectives in accordance with their individual 'lifeworld' - that is, their own objectives, definitions, knowledge and experiences which are in turn influenced and shaped by the recipients' socio-cultural background (Long, 1984, 1992; Long and van der Ploeg, 1988, 1989, 1994). Long goes on to argue that any encounter at the interface between actors of different hierarchies, such as street-level bureaucrats and recipients of policy, will naturally be

characterised by some form of resistance, as each actor seeks to defend and maximise their personal and/or institutional ideas and goals. In doing so, Long asserts that the two actors situated at an interface will seek to adopt various strategies in order to negotiate with one another in an attempt to implement their own objectives. Thus, where Lipsky asserts that only street-level bureaucrats will adopt coping strategies, Long argues that, in light of state intervention policy target groups will invariably seek to develop various strategies that will enable them to implement personal objectives. In the context of rural producers and state bureaucrats, Long and van der Ploeg (1994:79) explain, for example, that:

“ ... producers and householders actively construct, within the limits they face, their own patterns of farm and household organisation and their own ways of dealing with intervening agencies”.

This was further developed by Long and his colleagues through field research conducted in Mexico, where they studied the implementation of a new government-led scheme that aimed to develop and manage a basic national food chain (Arce and Long, 1990; Long, 1992; Long and van der Ploeg, 1994). Focusing upon the interface between rural producers and street-level bureaucrats - termed *tecnicos* - Long et al. revealed that farmers sought to adopt various ‘survival’ and ‘coping’ strategies in order to further their individual interests and objectives. In the case of one *tecnico*-farmer relationship, for example, Long et al. observed that, in seeking to further the adoption of new agricultural technology, the *tecnico* sought the co-operation of rural producers. However, interpreting the *tecnico* and the introduction of new technology as a form of state intervention, Long et al. observed that rural producers ignored the *tecnico*’s claims for co-operation and instead sought to adopt modes of technological improvement based upon local knowledge and experience.

Supporting Long’s (1984, 1992) analysis, Lowe et al. (1997) have recently found in their study of farm pollution regulation that, like the rural producers in Mexico, many Devonshire farmers seek to adopt various coping strategies in an attempt to resist powers of externalisation imposed upon them by the former National Rivers Authority (NRA) pollution inspectors. According to Lowe et al. (1997), the majority of farmers interviewed in the study area did comply with policy regulations and subsequently modified their pollution-control practices. However, it was revealed that a number of farmers sought to adopt strategies of resistance, reminiscent to those adopted by Scott’s (1985) peasants in rural Malaysia. These included, delaying tactics, keeping one’s head down, avoiding contact with the pollution inspector, ‘blackmailing’ the inspector or seeking to convince the pollution inspector that the personal objectives of the individual farmer are legitimate and in need of urgent implementation (Lowe et al., 1997). In conclusion, Lowe et al. (1997) have asserted that pollution inspectors may be armed with powers of authority, but farmers are not powerless policy actors. “Their limited

scope or inclination for action ... [is] ... a major determinant” of the outcome of any policy (Lowe et al., 1997:205).

Acknowledging that farmers are powerful autonomous decision makers, there has been a tendency amongst agri-environmental researchers to further an understanding of the influence that farmers have on the future of agri-environmental policy by conducting detailed analyses of how the agri-environmental decision-making nexus of the individual farmer is constructed. In other words, what factors are influencing farmers’ decisions to participate or not-participate in an agri-environmental scheme. While recognising that theories of behaviourism take a rather narrow analytical view of the policy implementation process, the majority of agri-environmental researchers have continued to adopt a behavioural approach within their analyses as, conceptually, it is believed to enable the analyst to get inside the world of the individual farmer and to understand the “motives, values and attitudes that determine ... [the farmers’] ... decision-making process” (Morris and Potter, 1995:55). Indeed, adopting a behavioural analytical framework within their farm based analyses, many researchers have identified a network of micro-structural and agency factors which, in some cases, have been proven statistically to influence farmers’ attitudes and decisions to participate in an agri-environmental scheme (Potter and Gasson, 1988; Potter and Lobley, 1992; Wilson, 1996, 1997).

Briefly, the factors identified may be described in accordance with Brotherton’s (1989, 1991) classification of ‘farmer’ and ‘scheme’ factors. In terms of ‘farmer factors’, it is widely acknowledged that agri-environmental participation may be influenced by a farmer’s age, educational background, length of residency, the presence of a potential successor, farm size, tenure, the farmers’ dependency on the farm as a primary source of income and the amount of non-intensively used farmland (Fig. 3.2.). Further, it has been found that outside the realm of the farmer’s personal characteristics, other factors may influence their agri-environmental decisions. These include, whether neighbours are participating in a scheme, the influence of community leaders in a farm district or the pace with which the new schemes are diffused and adopted within the locality (Jones, 1963; Wilson, 1992).

Classified as ‘scheme factors’, it is further evident that many additional factors influence farmers decisions to participate in an agri-environmental scheme. Wilson (1994) asserts, for example, that the duration of an agri-environmental agreement will influence many farmers’ decisions, as will the severity of change in farm management required by an individual scheme. Further, it has been widely asserted that the level of payments on offer to farmers willing to adopt statutory agri-environmental agreements will influence the majority of farmers’ decisions to participate in an agri-environmental scheme. Indeed, Brotherton (1991:246) has

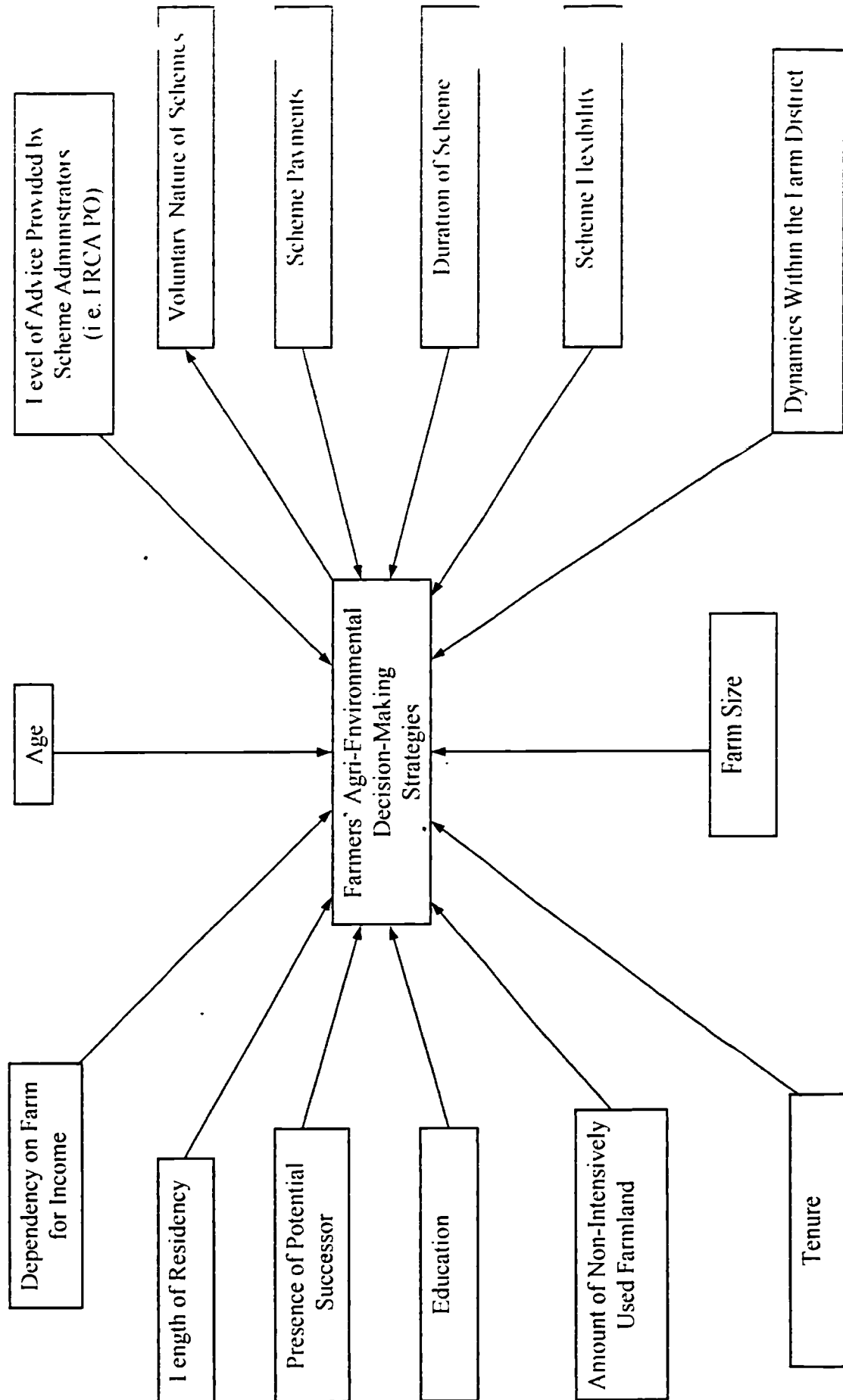


Fig. 3.2. Possible Factors Influencing Farmers' Agri-Environmental Decision-Making Strategies (Source: Adapted from Brotherton, 1989, 1991; Wilson, 1996, 1997)

gone as far as to argue that “the proportion to whom the scheme is financially attractive ... [is] ... the key variable in determining the proportion that participates”. Within this network of factors the FRCA PO has been revealed by a few researchers to be an influential actor in farmers’ agri-environmental decision-making practices (see Skerratt, 1994; Morris and Potter, 1995). In his study of the Cambrian Mountains ESA Wilson (1996, 1997) found, for example, that many farmers with larger land holdings in the area spoke of excellent relations with their ESA PO and considered their role as an essential part of the overall administration of the scheme. However, it must be recognised that as the FRCA PO seeks to encourage farmers to participate in an agri-environmental scheme they will be one among many possible factors influencing the agri-environmental decisions of the autonomous farmer.

It is widely recognised that in furthering an understanding of the implementation and effectiveness of UK agri-environmental policy, farm based behavioural analyses have proved to be extremely effectual in highlighting characteristic agri-environmental adopters and non-adopters. Generally, it is accepted that the younger more educated farmers, with the largest more economically buoyant farms will be the most willing farmers to adopt conservation practices on their farms, while the older less educated farmers, with the smallest farm business will seek to maintain an economically driven productivist attitude. Drawing upon their own study of farmers agri-environmental attitudes in Sussex, Morris and Potter (1995) have gone on to develop a participation spectrum of conservation adopters and non-adopters, which offers assistance to the agri-environmental implementer by providing a detailed exposition of farmers who may either characteristically participate in a scheme if targeted, or farmers who may need extra encouragement and advice before they decide to participate in an agri-environmental agreement (Fig. 3.3).

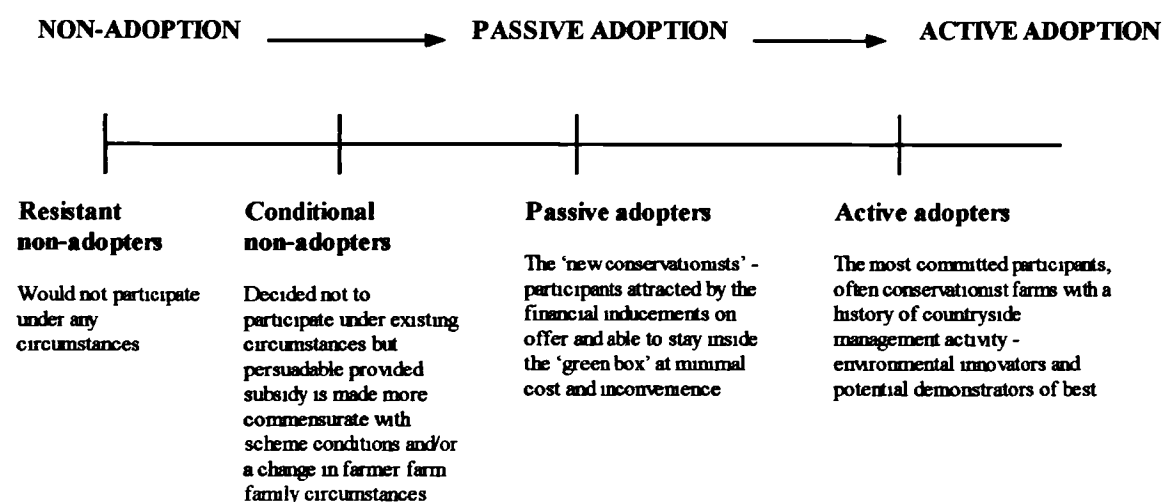


Fig. 3.3 Morris and Potters' Participation Spectrum (Source: Morris and Potter, 1995:58)

While acknowledging the value of Morris and Potter's (1995) participation spectrum, along with other behavioural analyses, a number of contemporary researchers have sought to build upon existing agri-environmental studies by attempting to follow political-economy theories in order to analyse the influence that macro-structural and agency factors have on farmers' agri-environmental decision-making strategies. As the following section outlines, such research studies have complemented behavioural analysis by identifying additional actors that influence the agri-environmental policy process. However, in doing so these studies have further brought the role and influence of the FRCA PO into question. Essentially, they have revealed that since the development of the UK's agri-environmental schemes, the traditional elitism of the agricultural policy community (see section 3.4.1) has slowly declined as new policy actors, most notably environmentalists, enter the sphere of agricultural decision-making and, at the ground level, operate alongside the PO providing new routes through which agri-environmental values and knowledge may be transferred down to the farming community. In this context, it is asserted that the role and influence of the FRCA PO cannot be considered in isolation from these new policy actors. As active 'members' of the agri-environmental policy process their relative influence on the implementation of individual agri-environmental schemes is an important issue for investigation within this research.

3.4.2 The Potential Power of 'New' Agri-Environmental Actors

The evolving context of the contemporary post-productivist regime of agriculture has been well documented throughout rural policy literature (Blunden and Curry, 1988; Winter, 1996; Harvey, 1997). Writers have detailed the increasing concerns over the structural, economic, and, in particular, the environmental inequities of productivist policies, noting that culminatively they have forced European and national agricultural policy makers to introduce regulations and policies aimed at the promotion of environmentally friendly farming practices (Whitby, 1996; Potter, 1998). Throughout this literature, researchers have highlighted the influential role that two particular actors have played in promoting the agri-environmental debate, and, forcing the elitist agricultural policy community to open up to external interests and implement post-productivist policies. Briefly, these actors have been identified as citizens and environmentalists.

Citizens

It is widely recognised that since the mid 1960s the social fabric of the British countryside has undergone considerable transformation. With increasing standards of living amongst middle-class urban residents, the countryside has witnessed an influx of urban-rural migrants seeking to escape the polluted sprawl of Britain's towns and cities for, what is often perceived

to be the peace and tranquillity of the rural idyll (Marsden et al., 1993; Whitby and Lowe, 1994; Ward et al., 1995). As urban migrants have settled in the countryside, however, the harsh realities of productivist policies and practices have been felt by many newcomers. The realisation that their idealised and romantic preconceptions of Arcadia are nothing more than 'chocolate box' imagery, has sparked many individuals to actively target and challenge traditional farming policies, values and practices. In their study of contemporary farm pollution regulation in Devon, Lowe et al. (1997) discovered, for example, that, as proponents of new agri-environmental values and ideologies, 'middle-class rural newcomers' would often directly challenge the productivist practices of individual farmers, going as far as to vigilantly observe watercourses and report to the former NRA wherever they suspected that a farmer may be polluting a nearby river or stream. As Lowe et al. (1997) went on to observe, ten of the sixty dairy farmers surveyed in Devon had experienced direct pressure from neighbours and local people to change their farming practices to more environmentally sensitive practices. In this context, Ward and Lowe (1994:173) assert that such rural social change has effectively provided "new routes through which environmental values can flow through farm households, influencing the ways farmers understand the environmental implications of their practices and the way they and their families think about their long term futures". It would thus appear that the autonomous decision-making powers of the individual farmer are being transferred to a new set of actors - one which, according to Whitby and Lowe (1994:176), "reflects concern more with materialism, consumption and life-style".

Although few researchers have sought to expand upon Lowe et al.'s. (1997) work and analyse the direct influence of middle-class neighbours on farmers' agri-environmental decisions and practices, it is widely acknowledged that the burgeoning population of rural newcomers have, in the last two decades, helped to catalyse a major shift in public and political attitudes to agriculture and the environment (Gaskell and Tanner, 1991; Buller, 1992; Hoggart et al., 1995). As Harper (1993:4) notes, "it is currently politically and socially acceptable to be 'green', indeed almost unacceptable not to be seen as so". This is reflected in the development of strong local environmental politics, and in the expansion of middle class conservation and residence groups (e.g. National Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), where, during the 1980s, membership levels evidently doubled to over three million (Whitby and Lowe, 1994). With the financial and ideological support of an environmentally focused public, conservationists such as the RSPB have been able to carry the public message into the political arena where, as it will now be discussed, they have, over the last thirty years, successfully lobbied the agricultural community to open their doors to environmental concerns and policies.

With the passing of the 1968 Countryside Act agriculturists and environmentalists were, for the first time, brought together as concerns over the detrimental impact that intensive forms of agriculture were having on the countryside forced statutory environmental agencies (i.e. National Parks Authority, Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) and Countryside Commission (CoCo)) and Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (ENGOS) such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), to embark upon a campaign that sought to challenge the productivist ethos of post-war agricultural policies. Of concern, was the “increasing realisation that agriculture, with its exemptions from most aspects of planning control could not be relied upon to protect the countryside either for the interests of recreationists and landscape preservationists or for nature conservationists and ecologists” (Winter, 1996:202). As political and public attention increasingly turned to the agricultural sector in the 1970s, empirical evidence added fuel to the agri-environmental debate as surveys such as that conducted by the NCC revealed that annually four percent of all SSSIs were being severely damaged by uncontrolled agricultural and forestry practices (NCC, 1977; Adams, 1993; Winter, 1996).

Initially, agricultural policy makers and farming interest groups sought to rigorously defend their elite policy community. Marketing farmers as natural custodians and stewards of the countryside, the NFU and CLA issued a joint statement in 1977, entitled ‘Caring for the Countryside’, in which they outlined how farmers have always cared for the natural environment and where possible have always sought to adopt conservation practices on their farms. As the agri-environmental debate deepened with the controversy over the reclamation of moorland in Exmoor National Park, environmentalists increasingly lobbied government to introduce statutory legislation to control all aspects of agricultural and forestry practices (MacEwan and MacEwan, 1982). To a degree their campaign was successful. Following Lord Porchester’s recommendations to introduce statutory controls on farming practices within Exmoor National Park, a newly elected Conservative government in 1979 discussed plans to introduce a national legislation that would seek to quell the antagonism between agriculturists and conservation groups by imposing planning controls on agricultural and forestry practices. However, throughout the formulation of, what was to become the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, environmental agencies and ENGOS were forced to remain peripheral in agricultural policy making functions, as legislative discussions were restricted to officials from the NFU, CLA, MAFF and the Rural Directorate of the Department of the Environment (DoE) (Winter, 1996).

In drawing up the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the NFU and CLA continued to defend the interests of farming communities by asserting that any imposition on agricultural practices

would have to be voluntary in nature. Sir Richard Butler, the then president of the NFU warned conservationists that to press for controls would be counter-productive, “push farmers into a corner with nowhere else to go and they will go for your throats” (in Cox et al., 1985b:146). Further, the farming lobby asserted that to gain farmers co-operation and compliance they should receive compensation in the form of profits foregone to conservation practices. The only aspects of compulsion proposed were that farmers would have to give up to twelve months notice of any intention to convert moor or heath in specific areas of national parks, and that farmers would have to stipulate any intention to undertake activities on SSSIs present on their land (see Adams, 1993). Not surprisingly, the environmental agencies and ENGOs voiced their hostility and opposition to many aspects of the proposed legislation that sought to secure the future of farmers, rather than that of the British countryside. However, as the Wildlife and Countryside Act was passed in 1981, it became evident that constrained by limited resources and poor co-ordination amongst individual groups, the lobbying tactics of the environmental agencies and ENGOs proved largely ineffectual as ministers implemented the principle of voluntarism which was to dominate future agri-environmental policy.

Despite the limited involvement that environmentalists were permitted in the formulation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the NCC did, for the first time, have direct access to the farming community as it continued to administer the SSSI system and, thus, took on the responsibility of administering and financing management agreements with farmers whose land fell within a SSSI. Thus, as Winter (1996:208) argued:

“for all the successes scored by the NFU in the passage of the Act, it represented a defeat for agricultural exceptionalism. And for the environmental groups, the passage of the Bill represented something of a baptism of fire. They engaged head on with the might of the farming lobby and emerged scathed but experienced. After 1981 most of the mainline environmental groups made it their business to understand agriculture and to confront many of the assumptions of the post-war settlement”.

Indeed, following the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, environmental agencies and ENGOs continued to campaign for the introduction of mandatory agri-environmental management agreements. They argued that under a voluntary principle the dichotomy of agricultural policies and the need for environmental protection could not be resolved and would, thus, further jeopardise the future of Britain’s countryside. Adding fuel to the fire, new evidence from a report conducted by the NCC, entitled ‘Nature Conservation in Great Britain’ revealed that in the UK alone 82 percent of the lowland meadows had been converted to arable land, 30 percent of the UK’s ancient woodlands had been destroyed, 60 percent of the lowland bogs had been drained and a quarter of all British hedgerows had been lost to agriculture during the post-war era (NCC, 1984; O’Riordan, 1987; Robinson, 1991). In the light of this empirical evidence, the NCC urged that conservationists should no longer compromise with the agricultural policy community. They must continue to challenge the farming lobby and to try to

gain a foothold in the agricultural policy process. Indeed, through the 1985 amendment of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the NCC did successfully negotiate the introduction of mandatory agreements on all SSSIs, but it was not until the controversy over the Halvergate Marshes in the Norfolk Broads, which lasted from 1980 to 1985, that MAFF was forced to officially recognise the environmental lobby as policy actors within the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies (O’Riordan, 1987; Blunden and Curry, 1988).

During the early 1980s, with the loss of the Broads marshland to agricultural practices at a rate of more than five per cent per year, the Broads Authority turned to the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act as a means of saving the last remaining stretch of open grazing marsh in eastern England (O’Riordan, 1987). As the inequities and inequalities of the Act would inevitably lead to the loss of this valuable marshland, a meeting was forced to take place in 1984 between the Broads Authority, the government’s own Countryside Commission (CoCo), MAFF and the DoE, in an effort to resolve the parody between agricultural and environmental policies (Blunden and Curry, 1988). For the environmental lobby this meeting represented a watershed in their campaign to further agri-environmental objectives. It was the first time that a statutory environmental agency had been permitted into the sanctum of agricultural policy makers, and, as O’Riordan (1987) details, the CoCo was given substantial decision-making powers to formulate the resultant Broads Grazing Marshes Conservation Scheme (BGMCS). Further, it was agreed that through dual funding from MAFF and the DoE, CoCo would administer the scheme for a three year pilot phase from April 1985 to March 1988. In this context, conservationists for the first time were able to work alongside the agricultural community and play an active role in the formulation and implementation of agri-environmental policy.

As agri-environmental concerns moved to the European debate on the CAP (see Whitby, 1996; Winter, 1996; Potter, 1998), environmentalists infiltrated further into the UK’s agricultural policy community. Responding to EU Regulation 797 85/EEC, MAFF called upon the statutory environmental agencies to provide advice and assistance in the designation of ESAs. Forty six areas in England and Wales were proposed by the NCC, CoCo and English Heritage, from which six were initially chosen through further consultation between MAFF and the environmental agencies (Whitby, 1994). Since then both the statutory agencies and ENGOS have played a central role in the formulation of agri-environmental policy. Following EU Regulation 2078 92/EEC, they have been consulted widely on the implementation of the UK’s agri-environmental programme and have provided evidence and advice to policy makers and ministers wherever existing schemes are reviewed. Indeed, a number of environmental agencies and ENGOS were recently invited to submit evidence to a House of Commons Select Committee investigating ‘Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Other UK agri-environmental

Schemes' (House of Commons, 1997)³. Participants included, EN, CoCo, National Trust, RSPB, Wildlife Trusts, CPRE and the Game Conservancy Trust, who presented their thoughts and ideas to Parliament on the current and future state of the UK's agri-environmental policy. Further, in some cases these environmental groups have also acted as policy formulators, designing and administering schemes such as the Countryside Stewardship (CS) Scheme which was originally developed by the CoCo and only transferred to MAFF in April, 1996, and, more recently, the Arable Stewardship option of the CS Scheme which, although still in its pilot phase, was developed by EN, the RSPB and the Game Conservancy Trust.

Over the last decade, therefore, it is widely acknowledged that environmentalists have reached unprecedented levels of co-operation with the elite agricultural policy community. Where previously statutory environmental agencies and ENGOs were forced to occupy marginal positions of political power, they have become internalised in the agri-environmental decision making nexus, where agricultural policy makers readily encourage them to act as consultants and policy formulators. Indeed, following the 1995 Rural White Paper, MAFF (House of Commons, 1996) established two official consultation groups to assist agricultural policy makers and interest groups to discuss the development and implementation of the UK's agri-environmental schemes. These were the National Agri-Environmental Steering Group (NAESG) and the National Agri-Environmental Forum (NAEF). The NAESG is comprised of MAFF and statutory environmental agencies. According to MAFF (1996a), they meet approximately four times a year, and discuss the current and future status of the UK's agri-environmental programmes. The NAEF on the other hand provides an arena for farming and interest groups, ENGOs, environment agencies and MAFF to meet biannually and consult with one another on the strategic development of agri-environmental schemes (see appendix 1) (MAFF, 1996a).

Concerns have been raised that the success of environmentalists over the past decade may, inadvertently be their demise. Hart and Wilson (in press) argue that, "ten years ago, ... MAFF would not have been willing to include environmental organisation into AEP debates ... However, despite this being a good step forward towards a more inclusive policy-making strategy, now that environmental pressure groups have become incorporated into the policy-making process, they are no longer able to speak out against government policy as they once did, for fear of being excluded once again". While these concerns warrant further investigation, it cannot be denied that never before have environmentalists enjoyed such close working relations with the agricultural policy community. They have become internalised in the 'official' agri-environmental policy process where, as consultants and policy formulators, they

³ The author was present, as an observer at a number of the sessions where the various environmental agencies and ENGOs submitted their evidence to the Agriculture Select Committee

have been able to play a central role in shaping the content and direction of contemporary agri-environmental policy.

At the local level, the extent to which new pressure groups are actively involved in the 'official' policy implementation process is less conclusive. Little research has specifically analysed the influence that 'new' agri-environmental actors, such as environmental agencies and ENGOs, have had on the implementation of individual agri-environmental schemes. However, while this thesis seeks to address this gap in the literature, a number of research studies have revealed that, since the development of agri-environmental concerns and policies, there has been an erosion of the state's elite agricultural advisory service as an increasing number of actors have emerged within the British countryside to transfer general environmental values and knowledge down to the farming community. In some cases, it is evident that these new actors have had major repercussions on the decisions and actions of the individual farmer and have in turn challenged the role and influence of the state's on-farm conservation advisors (see Lowe et al., 1990, 1997; Ward and Lowe, 1994; Munton, 1995; Ward et al., 1995; Winter, 1995, 1996).

'New' Agri-Environmental Advisors

Throughout the post-war productivist era, the state's agricultural advisory service (i.e. NAAS, and later ADAS), established itself as the primary provider of advice and information to the farming community in England and Wales. Through DAOs, farmers were continuously provided with up to date information concerning the utility of new technologies and techniques aimed at the expansion and intensification of individual farm production units (see section 3.3). As discussed in section 3.3, NAAS and ADAS proved to be a highly effective advisory service. They guided farmers through a previously unprecedented 'agricultural revolution' and in turn assisted policy makers to fulfil their productivist objectives. Directly aligned to the agricultural industry, the state advisory service proved to be extremely popular amongst many UK farmers. Results from an independent market research study conducted amongst a thousand UK farmers in 1985 revealed what Dancey (1993) described as encouraging results for ADAS. "Overall ADAS was regarded well by the industry, particularly for its impartiality and independence. Also prized were its strong background in R & D [research and development] and its ability to foster and promote new developments" (Dancey, 1993:384). This was further supported in a survey of 262 farmers in southern England where Munton et al. (1987) found that 87 percent of the sample size favoured ADAS as an advisory source, when compared with private agricultural consultants.

Towards the late 1980s, however, ADAS' future as the primary agricultural advisory service in the UK looked increasingly uncertain. As ADAS introduced charges on the provision of

non-agri-environmental advice (see p. 45), a number of research studies revealed a rise in the presence and use of private advisory sources as the growing subsumption of the farm production process by industrial capitals forced many farmers to seek more specialist and technical advice, often provided by seed and chemical merchants, and independent consultants (Whatmore et al., 1987; Eldon, 1988; Fearn and Ritson, 1989; Hawkins, 1991; Clunies-Ross and Hildyard, 1992; Ward, 1994). Further, as agri-environmental concerns and policies emerged within the agricultural policy process, the advisory market witnessed a mushrooming of 'new' agri-environmental advisory sources provided by many of the environmental agencies and ENGOs who had earlier campaigned so assiduously for the integration of agricultural and nature conservation practices.

Throughout their agri-environmental campaign environmentalists had placed considerable emphasis on the need for advice and information. It was widely asserted that if post-productivist rhetoric was ever to be implemented at the ground level then farmers must be able to draw upon a knowledgeable environmental advisory service who could provide up to date information and advice to any farmer and/or landowner wishing to adopt environmentally friendly farming practices (Westmacott and Worthington, 1974; Baldock and Conder, 1987). While the environmental lobby, particularly the CPRE, secured promises from the agricultural ministry that ADAS would provide free environmental advice (Winter, 1996), many of the environmental agencies and ENGOs sought to take a more pro-active approach within the national campaign and established their own agri-environmental advisory services. In the early 1980s, for example, the RSPB established its own Conservation Management Advisory Service with the primary aim of providing advice to farmers and landowners seeking to adopt appropriate land-management practices for the conservation and promotion of specific bird species. Concomitantly, the NCC sought to establish a role as agri-environmental advisors by sponsoring an experiment with three farm-based ecologists to develop a body of practical expertise which the NCC could then impart on the UK's farming communities. While these advisory services tended to remain closely aligned to the individual interests and objectives of each environmental group, the formation of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), sought, for the first time, to establish a general agri-environmental advisory service for the UK's farming community.

FWAG

Formed in the aftermath of the 1970 Silsoe Conference (Barber, 1970), FWAG was initially intended to act as a national forum for conservationists and agriculturists to come together to discuss practical mechanisms by which both interest groups could help to resolve the escalating environmental costs of productivist farming practices (Blunden and Curry, 1988). Comprised of representatives from NAAS, the CLA, CoCo, the Forestry Commission, NFU,

NCC, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC), Royal Institute of Chartered Surveys, the British Trust for Ornithology and the RSPB, FWAG set out to specifically:

- “1) promote liaison with all appropriate authorities on subjects affecting agriculture and wildlife conservation;*
- 2) To stimulate and assist the organisation of further conferences on a local basis;*
- 3) To approach agricultural colleges and institutes with a view to their including nature conservation on their courses;*
- 4) To stimulate the investigation of certain specific problems at suitable Research Stations and to disseminate the results of research;*
- 5) To discuss with Game Advisers how the advice they give could be modified to take account of nature conservation;*
- 6) To lecture widely to farming and naturalist audiences ... [and to];*
- 7) explore the possibility of MAFF including conservation exhibits in their displays at agricultural shows” (Cox et al., 1990:18).*

Much of the initial survival and later success of FWAG, has been attributed to the financial input from conservation groups such as the RSPB and to Jim Hall, the first national FWAG officer. With the appropriate resources, Jim Hall set out to actively promote FWAG throughout the farming communities of the UK, and, in essence, established FWAG’s identity and future as a leader in agri-environmental advisory provision (Cox et al., 1990). Despite their representation on the national forum of FWAG, the elite agricultural policy community initially provided limited financial and political support to the new agri-environmental group. In their respective journals and magazines, the CLA and NFU made little reference to FWAG and instead encouraged their members to look towards ADAS as the main source of future conservation advice (Cox et al., 1990). Following the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act, however, the Farming and Wildlife Trust was established to which the NFU and CLA became patrons. Sceptics immediately asserted that such action on the part of agriculturists, was essentially being used as a means to stave off any further criticism from conservationists (see Cox et al., 1985b). As the Countryside Commission’s representative on the national FWAG asserted, “MAFF is tending to use the organisation as a cosmetic screen, which allows them to parade conservationist ideals without having to do much about it” (Countryside Commission, internal memo, March 1980 in Cox et al., 1990:45). Indeed, as environmentalists increased pressure on the farming interest groups to prove that the voluntary principle of the 1981 Act was more than mere rhetoric and could, in reality, be implemented, the NFU and CLA turned once again to FWAG as their “main vehicle ... to highlight and reinforce a conservation ethic and co-operative spirit amongst farmers and landowners” (Cox et al., 1990:47). In this context, Cox et al. (1985b:148) suggest that, “as a department used to corporatist relations with producer groups [i.e. NFU and CLA], MAFF has sought in effect to ‘license’ its own environmental interest group”. Indeed, despite initial isolation, FWAG has, over the years, become closely aligned to the agricultural community. As a national forum they have assiduously avoided acting as a pressure group for conservationist interests. FWAG takes no part in lobbying and seeks to avoid controversial issues such as the right to public access

(Winter, 1996). It is perhaps at the local level, however, where FWAG's role as an informative and politically neutral 'environmentally' focused group has gained the support and approval of the UK's farming communities.

During the mid 1970s, FWAG sought to build upon their national mediatory role and establish county FWAG groups as a medium through which an agri-environmental advisory service could be offered to local farming communities. By the end of 1975, nine groups were established. However, due to limited funding their advisory capacity remained marginal, forcing them to offer a mere forum for local agriculturists and conservationists to discuss specific local agri-environmental issues. Despite its slow development, the advisory capacity of local FWAG groups began to emerge in the early 1980s. Gloucestershire and Somerset were among the first county groups to provide a full time adviser, while Suffolk offered a consultancy service to local farmers keen to obtain conservation oriented advice (Winter, 1996). While acknowledging the potential capabilities of these local advisory groups, some commentators initially believed that ADAS should fulfil the provision of agri-environmental advice (Winter, 1985; Lowe et al., 1986). Following the 1984 Bell Report ADAS did introduce the provision of free conservation advice through the Farm and Countryside Service (see section 3.3). However, as government rationalisation forced ADAS to enter into the commercial market of agricultural advice, it became increasingly evident that within ADAS the promotion of environmental advice would, in the future, take a backseat to the provision of commercially viable advice. In this context, the market for FWAG's advisory service became apparent. With other environmental agencies and ENGOS providing specialist advice, and ADAS clearly constrained by commercialist objectives, FWAG looked set to evolve as a primary provider of general agri-environmental advice throughout the UK.

With the establishment of the Farming and Wildlife Trust in 1984, funding was made available to appoint up to 30 local FWAG advisors across the UK. Their main objectives were to "stimulate and broadcast amongst farmers and landowners, a social ethic concerning stewardship of the countryside, including the protection and enhancement of national diversity and beauty with the context of modern farming practices and estate management" (Blunden and Curry, 1988:181). In order to implement these objectives the local FWAG advisors, often working in close co-operation with ADAS officials, sought to conduct individual farm visits as the most effective extension tool with which to advise and promote agri-environmental practise. Throughout their work FWAG advisers promoted the notion of 'voluntary co-operation and goodwill' (Cox et al., 1985b). They sought to work with local farmers, to suggest, advise and to set an example of how agricultural and environmental concerns could be integrated within individual farm plans. Throughout FWAG's history great emphasis has been placed on co-operative action with the farming community. The advisers worked closely to county committees, who are invariably comprised of local, influential dignitaries from the

agricultural and environmental sector, with the chairman of the county FWAG usually represented by a local farmer (Winter, 1995). Today, nearly all counties in England and Scotland have a full time FWAG advisor. Their remit remains firmly based on the principles of voluntarism and compromise. Farmers continue to be encouraged to seek their advice, and much emphasis remains on the agricultural knowledge and sympathies of the advisors (Winter, 1996).

While FWAG has developed into one of the most “serious players” in the provision of agri-environmental advice (Winter, 1995), it is evident that operating alongside FWAG and the state advisory service, a network of advisory sources have emerged over the years offering environmental advice and information to UK farmers and landowners. In what is perhaps the most detailed contemporary study of agri-environmental advisory provision, Winter (1995) subdivides this complex network of advisors into primary, secondary and marginal providers (Table 3.3).

“Primary refers to agencies where advice giving is the main or one of the main functions. Secondary agencies are those where advice is a recognised function to which some importance is attached but where it is clearly subsidiary to many other functions. Marginal refers to those organisations, where direct on-farm advice may be given ... but where it is incidental or marginal to wider functions” (Winter, 1995:56).

Although Winter (1995) goes on to provide a detailed analysis of each of the main advisory sources, outlining their interests, objectives and output, a brief account of many of these additional agri-environmental advisors is provided here as an essential pre-requisite to understanding the variety of ‘new’ agri-environmental actors known to operate in the locality, and potentially alongside the FRCA PO in the implementation of individual agri-environmental schemes.

i) Local Authorities

Despite difficulties in ascertaining the precise level of agri-environmental advice provided by local authorities, Winter (1995:79) maintains that they are ‘important players’ in the UK’s advisory network. The majority of local authorities employ officers to provide advice on specific conservation grant schemes, such as local countryside management projects and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Where time and finances permit, Winter (1995) noted that a number of county councils also provide a general agri-environmental advisory service, providing advice to farmers on a range of issues, such as habitat creation, woodland management, pollution control, landscape enhancement and ecological assessments. Further, local authorities evidently contribute to the wider agri-environmental advisory network. As Winter (1995) detailed, county councils will often provide funding to various organisations, such as FWAG and county wildlife trusts, and, in some cases, offer practical assistance to these groups in the form of administrative support and office accommodation.

ii) Game Conservancy Trust

Established during the 1930s The Game Conservancy Trust (GCT) has developed into a leading research charity, highly regarded by policy makers and farming communities for their up to date knowledge, information and advice on all aspects of habitat management related to the successful rearing of game (Winter, 1995; Harvey, 1997). Unlike many charitable organisations with an interest in habitat conservation, the GCT does not own or manage any nature reserves. Its contribution to agri-environmentalism is primarily through its largest research department - the Farm and Ecology Unit, and through The Game Conservancy Limited - an associated company of the GCT who provides a chargeable advisory service to members who seek to put into practice the research findings of the GCT.

iii) RSPB

Building upon their earlier work in the Conservation Management Advisory Service, the RSPB currently provides four person-years of advice to UK farmers in relation to specific RSPB schemes, which seek to secure sympathetic management of habitats for corncrakes, stone curlews and cirl buntings (Winter, 1995). Further, as the RSPB has, in recent years, sought to widen their interests to include broad principles of landscape and ecological management, they have attempted to offer farmers more general agri-environmental advice, such as the best management strategy to adopt to promote wildlife on set-aside land. According to Winter (1995:85), “the RSPB considers that its role in this area [of general advisory provision] is likely to increase and cite the inclusion of once common farmland bird species on the Red Data list as a reason for providing more direct advice to farmers”.

iv) County Wildlife Trusts

Many of the 45 County Wildlife Trusts currently operating in the UK have long provided an advisory service to local farmers and landowners keen to conserve specific areas of their farmland (Winter, 1995; Dwyer and Hodge, 1996). Generally this advice has been directly related to the management of designated conservation sites, such as county wildlife sites, local nature reserves, and often, in conjunction with EN's SSSIs. However, where county trusts possess a relatively large resource base, Winter (1995) notes that this advisory provision may be extended, with some county groups providing a more pro-active advisory service, offering general agri-environmental advice to farmers throughout their locality.

v) Environmental Agencies (i.e. EN, CoCo, EH, Forestry Authority, National Parks Authority)

It is widely recognised that all of the statutory environmental agencies currently provide advice directly to farmers and landowners throughout the UK (Clark, 1989; Clark and O'Riordan, 1989; Ward, 1994; MAFF, 1996a). However, as Winter (1995:85) noted, this advice is “almost always in the context of visits to discuss particular features or schemes”. In drawing

	Primary Providers	Secondary Providers	Marginal Providers
England	Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS), Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), Forestry Authority (FA), Game Conservancy Trust (GCT), Private Consultants	Countryside Commission, English Nature, National Farmers Union/Country Landowners' Association (NFU CLA), Local Authorities (LAs), National Parks Authorities (NPAs) County Wildlife Trusts (CWTs) RSPB	British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC), British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV).
Northern Ireland	Department of Agricultural, Northern Ireland	Department of the Environment (NI), RSPB, Ulster Wildlife Trust, Ulster Farmers' Union	FWAG, Local Authorities.
Scotland	FWAG, FA, GCT, Private Consultants, Scottish Agricultural College.	NFU, RSPB, Scottish River Purification Boards, Scottish Landowners' Federation, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Wildlife Trust	BASC, BTCV, LAs
Wales	ADAS, FWAG, FA, GCT, Private Consultants	Coed Cym, Countryside Council for Wales, Farmers Union of Wales, NFU, LAs and NPAs, CWTs, RSPB	BASC, BTCV.

Table 3.3. Providers of Agri-Environmental Advice in the UK (Winter, 1995:58).

up SSSI management agreements with individual farmers/landowners, for example, EN - the statutory agency responsible for administering the SSSI system - will always ensure that a conservation officer will visit the farmer to discuss and advise how they may positively manage the SSSI (English Nature, 1996). Likewise, the Forestry Authority (FA) provides an advisory service to any farmer and/or landowner seeking grants to plant or maintain any area of woodland on their farmland (Winter, 1996).

Given the complexity of the number and type of agri-environmental advisory sources, concerns have been raised as to possible contradictions in advice given to farmers; duplication of existing work already under way by environmental agencies; and potential confusion for the individual farmers, not knowing who to contact for what, where or when (Clark and O'Riordan, 1989; Dwyer and Hodge, 1996). As a solution a number of academics and policy actors have proposed that farmers in England may benefit from a 'first stop shop' for advice as recently introduced in Wales (MAFF, 1996a; NFU, 1996). In particular, it is believed that by establishing one all-encompassing advisory service, farmers and landowners would always know that they could contact just one body in which to obtain all the agri-environmental advice and information that they require. To date, however, the first stop shop in England remains a topic of debate amongst agriculturists and environmentalists. MAFF appear keen to promote themselves as the future provider of all agri-environmental advice (MAFF, 1996a), but, not surprisingly, many of the environmental agencies and ENGOs remain unconvinced by such a proposal. In their evidence to the recent Agriculture Select Committee, English Nature (1996) asserted, for example, that "First Stop Shops' should be established but we suggest the network extends beyond just local MAFF offices" (p3). As agri-environmentalists fail to reach a consensus, therefore, the complex network of advisory services that evidently operates within the British countryside looks set to remain in the near future.

Effectiveness of the 'New' Agri-Environmental Advisors

Despite the concerns of those commentators advocating the development of a one stop shop for advice, it is apparent that many UK farmers have succeeded in finding their way around the complex network of agri-environmental advisory sources. A number of surveys and research studies have revealed that, since the development of agri-environmental concerns and policies, a relatively large number of farmers have sought and received conservation advice from a plethora of public, private and voluntary sources. An OMIFARM survey conducted by CEAS (1991) revealed, for example, that approximately 28 per cent of farmers surveyed had received conservation advice during a twelve month period. Further, a telephone survey of 650 farmers in Devon, North Yorkshire and Suffolk, revealed that 37 per cent of the survey sample were in receipt of advice concerning conservation and environmental management (PIEDA, 1993).

In his detailed exploration of agri-environmental advice, Winter (1995) expressed some caution over the validity of these figures. He argued that measuring the input of advisory sources and the level of advice taken up by farmers is extremely problematic. Commenting upon the PIEDA (1993) survey, Winter (1995) drew attention to the problems of the definitions of 'conservation advice' used within research studies. He asserted that, in the PIEDA (1993) survey, "advice is defined as not only 'someone visiting your farm, but also advice over the 'phone, by word of mouth, in pamphlets or advice which may have been given during the course of advice on commercial matters'. With such a broad definition of advice the 37% is, in fact, worrying low rather than encouragingly high as it first appears". Moreover, a number of researchers have expressed scepticism as to the level of conservation advice which is actually implemented by farmers in the locality (Carr, 1988; Lowe et al., 1990). A study conducted by the Centre for Rural Studies (1990) revealed, for example, that farm conservation advisors would often report difficulties in persuading farmers of the importance of managing and retaining existing semi-natural features, or, of the need to integrate conservation into general farming practices and plans. Even the most receptive farmers would select the advice given by advisers and modify it according to their own perceptions of appropriate conservation practices - further evidence of the power and influence that farmers often wield in the agri-environmental policy process.

Despite such cautionary findings, the conclusions of the Centre for Rural Studies' (1990) survey were generally favourable to the advisory agencies covered (four county FWAG's, one National Parks Authority and one county council). "Advice was taken up to some extent by two thirds of the farmers interviewed and nearly one half had implemented all the advice received. The quality of the advice given was consistently high with a good level of detail" (Winter, 1995:247). Moreover, the study illustrated that many farmers in the UK are willing to move beyond the state advisory services, to seek and receive advice from the 'new' agri-environmental advisory sources. Indeed, although farmers are often obliged to contact the various 'new' actors for advice related to specific schemes and/or grants, there is increasing evidence that many farmers are, independently turning towards the 'new' advisory sources for both specific and general agri-environmental advice. Recently, The Game Conservancy Trust (1995:49) asserted, for example, that:

"it is reassuring to know that even though the opportunities to opt for free general conservation advice have never been greater, farmers and landowners are increasingly joining with keepers and shooting folk by drawing on our professional expertise".

Winter's (1995) detailed study of advisory provision supported these claims. According to Winter (1995:84), "Game Conservancy officers make approximately 400 visits per annum to farmers or groups of farmers in order to provide advice on matters pertaining to successful game rearing, such as woodland and headland management". Supporting this trend toward the

utilisation of 'new' agri-environmental advisory sources, Winter (1995, 1996) recently revealed that, in 1993/94 FWAG provided 34.8 person-years of advice to farmers in England, while ADAS only provided 13 staff years of free conservation advice. Although Winter (1995) went on to note that ADAS devoted a further 56 staff years to free pollution advice, he asserted that the level of advisory provision made by FWAG had increased by 40 per cent since 1990. Translating this into the number of individual farm visits made, Winter (1995) noted that annually ADAS had only visited 1,400 farms, in comparison to 3,500 visits made by local FWAG advisers. Supporting these results, Winter et al. (1996) have further revealed that many contemporary farmers are increasingly seeking the advice of FWAG in preference to the former public ADAS. Drawing upon a survey of 329 farmers in England, they outlined that, in particular:

"A significantly higher proportion of the FWAG farmers than of the ADAS sample had implemented all of the advice given ... [and] ... a significantly higher proportion of FWAG recipients were highly satisfied with the advice received" (Winter et al., 1996:vii).

As a relative newcomer into the field of advisory provision, FWAG is effectively proving itself to be a more popular and effective source of general agri-environmental advice compared with the traditional state advisory service. Whether a similar scenario has developed between the FRCA PO and FWAG in the specific context of MAFF's agri-environmental schemes is a primary issue to be analysed in this research.

Summary

In summary, therefore, it is evident that this section of the thesis has brought the role and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer into considerable question. As discussed, MAFF currently asserts that the FRCA PO is the key to the implementation and outcome of the UK's agri-environmental schemes. However, despite conceptual and historical support for MAFF's arguments, this section of the thesis has drawn upon existing research studies and revealed that a complex network of actors are actively involved in the agri-environmental policy process, and, in some cases, have directly influenced the implementation and outcome of the UK's agri-environmental schemes. Firstly, in light of the voluntary nature of MAFF's agri-environmental schemes, it is evident that the FRCA PO has had to operate in accordance with farmers autonomous decision making strategies. In some cases, the individual PO has been shown to influence farmers' agri-environmental decisions, but researchers have revealed that they are only one actor within a network of factors evidently shaping and determining farmers' agri-environmental participatory behaviour. Secondly, drawing upon historical and contemporary accounts, it has been revealed how, over the last two decades, the traditional elitism of the agricultural policy community has slowly declined as a 'new' set of actors, most notably consumers and environmentalists, have infiltrated into the agri-environmental policy process. Today, environmental agencies and ENGOs are actively

involved in the formulation of agri-environmental policy. They help to shape the content and direction of the agri-environmental schemes, which the FRCA PO in turn implements. Further, existing research studies have revealed that at the local level, these 'new' agri-environmental actors have increasingly provided general on-farm conservation advice to farming communities and, in some cases, have directly influenced farmers' agri-environmental practices. But what influence have these actors had in the implementation of individual agri-environmental schemes? Have they eroded the power and influence of the FRCA PO by directly influencing farmers' decisions to participate in an agri-environmental scheme, or, has the FRCA PO, like the national agricultural policy makers, drawn upon the environmental expertise of these groups in order to assist them to implement the individual agri-environmental schemes? It is clearly evident that, in seeking to address these questions, analysis needs to examine the FRCA PO in relation to all actors operating in the agri-environmental implementation process. Failure to do so will impede analysis from gaining a holistic understanding of the role and relative influence that this one local-level implementer has on the implementation and outcome of policy.

Having established the necessity to analyse the agri-environmental implementer in relation to their macro-socio and political contexts, questions are raised as to the most appropriate conceptual and/or theoretical framework in which to situate this research. In terms of understanding the role and influence of local-level implementers, Chapter 2 outlined the possible utility of Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy. In what is one of the most comprehensive theorisation's of policy implementers, Lipsky (1980) provides a detailed understanding of the behavioural characteristics and activities of street-level bureaucrats, in addition to their relationships with recipients of policy and bureaucratic superiors. However, as Ham and Hill (1993:142) assert, "Lipsky does not really try to link his analysis to a macro-sociological perspective". Throughout his theory, Lipsky maintains an individualistic analytical approach. He chooses to focus on the micro-social context of the street-level bureaucrat with little analysis of the role and influence that external pressure groups may bring to bear on the decisions and actions of the individual implementer. While this theoretical approach has proven to be useful in the analysis of some local-level implementers (see section 2.5), it would appear that where a holistic understanding of the agri-environmental implementer requires an analysis of both their micro and macro-social contexts, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy can only provide a limited theoretical framework in which to situate such an analysis. Moreover, Lipsky's conceptualisation of policy recipients as powerless and largely ineffectual policy actors, clearly contradicts the empirically established concept of farmers as powerful autonomous agri-environmental decision makers. In this context, the following section seeks to ascertain an alternative conceptual and/or theoretical approach in which to analyse the role and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer. This is not to deny that Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy may still provide a detailed and

accurate understanding of the agri-environmental implementer's micro-social world. However, there is evidently a need to search for an alternative approach that may facilitate a holistic understanding of the agri-environmental implementer.

3.5 Searching for an Alternative Conceptual Approach

As policy implementation studies have evolved there has been a continual advancement in conceptual and theoretical approaches to understand the policy process. Many analysts have attempted to move beyond micro-sociological analyses, such as Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy, and have sought to examine the local-level implementer in relation to their wider macro-structural and agency contexts. In the following sections, the various approaches adopted by researchers will be analytically reviewed in an attempt to ascertain a more appropriate conceptual or theoretical framework in which to analyse the role and relative influence of the FRCA PO.

3.5.1 Political-Economy Theories

Towards the late 1980s, an increasing number of policy analysts and academics sought to adopt and advocate political-economy theories as a means of understanding the complex inter-actor relations that evidently take place in the implementation of policies. At the heart of their debate was the notion that to understand policy implementation analysts must accept that the objectives, decisions and actions of local-level implementers will be shaped and determined by macro socio-political and economic factors. As Cloke (1987:24) argued:

"the key to our understanding of these processes ... lies in analyses both of the constraints on the operation of policy-action continuum, and of attempts to structure this operation in order to limit the autonomy and discretion available to competing actors and agencies".

First and foremost, political economy theorists advocated that the decisions and actions of all policy actors, including street-level bureaucrats will be constrained and influenced by the form, function and apparatus of the state.

"Any thought of policy makers starting with a clean slate is entirely misleading. Before beginning their negotiations within the policy-action continuum, policy makers implicitly accept an externally imposed definition of the 'art of the possible' which is dictated by [the state-society relationship]" (Cloke and Little, 1990:101).

Essentially, it is argued that the nature of the state sets specific constitutional rules and procedures which determine political power, negotiations and activities. Implementers will be constrained by the need to conform to the existing nature of the state, which will predetermine

their objectives, action and relationships with other policy actors. In this context, Cloke and Little (1987, 1990) argue that policy making and implementation should be viewed as complex political phenomena grounded within the overall context of the state. "Unless the form, function and apparatus of the state are fully appreciated research into policy making and planning will be dogged by inherently but largely untested assumptions concerning why policies are made, and on whose behalf they are implemented" (Cloke and Little, 1987:343).

Attempting to explain the nature of state-society relations in contemporary society, and its influence upon the policy process, political scientists have developed a number of theories which, in turn offer different conceptual explanations for the role and influence of local level implementers. These primarily include theories of elitism, Marxism, pluralism and corporatism. Detailed discussions of these theories can be found throughout the policy literature (see Clark and Dear, 1984; Cox et al., 1985; Cloke and Little, 1987, 1990; Ham and Hill, 1993). However, for the purpose of searching for an alternative conceptual framework to Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy, a brief review of each theory is provided.

Elitism

Elite state theory advocates that political power is concentrated within the hands of a minority of policy actors (Mosca, 1939; Wright Mills, 1956; Scott, 1982). According to Bottomore (1966), these may be defined in terms of a political elite and a political class. "The political elite ... will include members of the government and of the high administration, military leaders, and, in some cases, politically influential families of an aristocracy or royal house and leaders of powerful economic enterprises" (Bottomore, 1966:14). In addition, the political class may comprise leaders of political parties in opposition, trade union leaders, businessmen and politically active intellectuals (see Ham and Hill, 1993). In this context, elitism may be based on a multiplicity of sources, such as the occupation of formal office, wealth, technical expertise and knowledge (Hill, 1993). Further, protagonists of the elite model of power recognise that pressure groups are involved in the policy process. However, they contend that their relative influence is dependent upon the extent to which their interests are consistent with the objectives of the powerful elite.

In accordance with Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy, the individual bureaucrat may be interpreted as a member of an elite political class. As chapter 2 outlined, Lipsky asserts that the street-level bureaucrat is a powerful policy actor. They possess knowledge of policies which policy target groups require, while official policy makers look towards the street-level bureaucrat for information pertaining to the recipients of policy. Essentially, the street-level bureaucrat possesses a powerful source of knowledge which, according to concepts of elitism, actively admits them into a powerful elitist state. In the context of the agri-environmental

implementer, however, their position within an elitist state has already been brought into question. The involvement of environmental pressure groups in the formulation of agri-environmental policy and in the dissemination of advice indicates that the agri-environmental implementer operates within an open and fragmented political environment.

Marxism

Drawing upon Marx's seminal 'Das Kapital', Miliband (1973) has developed an instrumentalist conception of Marxism in which to theorise state-society relations (see O'Connor, 1973; Gough, 1979). Focusing upon the relationship between economic power and political power, Miliband asserts that the state acts as an instrument for bourgeois domination in a capitalistic society⁴. According to Miliband (1973), similar backgrounds between the state elite and members of the bourgeois facilitate this class power. Concomitantly, it is advocated that the bourgeois are able to exercise power as a pressure group through personal contacts and networks within the state. Further, Miliband asserts that, the state is constrained by its need to assist the process of capital accumulation. In other words, "the freedom of action of state officials is limited, although not eliminated, by their need to assist the process of capital accumulation, which stems from their dependence on a successful economic base for their continued survival in office" (Ham and Hill, 1993:35). Marxist theory goes on to assert that, driven by economically motivated objectives, states will create conditions to further production and, thus, support bourgeois capitalists in the production of profit. In this context, Marxism maintains the political supremacy of the economically dominant class. State officials, formal policy makers and local-level implementers, such as the street-level bureaucrat, have little control over the policy process. Their decisions and actions are shaped by production led objectives, to the benefit of the capitalistic policy target group.

Pluralism

As one of the most influential theories of the state, pluralism emulates Schumpeter's (1947) definition of democracy and advocates that power is widely distributed amongst individuals and organisations throughout the policy process (Dahl, 1961; Beer, 1965; Lindblom, 1977; Jordan and Richardson, 1987; Dearlove and Saunders, 1984). "No group is without power to influence decision-making, and equally no group is dominant. Any group can ensure that its political preferences and wishes are adopted, if it is sufficiently determined" (Ham and Hill, 1993:28). Within this framework, pluralism places considerable emphasis on the role of pressure groups within 'official' policy making processes. They are regarded as equivalent

⁴It should be noted that Miliband's conception of instrumentalist Marxism has been criticised by structuralists, such as Poulantzas (1975), Hirst (1977) and Jessop (1982). According to Poulantzas, the class background of state officials is not important. Of significance are the structural constraints placed on the state which explain the political supremacy of the economically elite.

political actors to government agencies and political parties. In this context, the local level implementer can not be regarded as the exclusive, important and influential policy actor, that was advocated by Lipsky in his theory of street-level bureaucracy. Instead, under a pluralist state, it is argued that all policy actors and pressure groups may influence policy, furthering their individual interests and objectives through the implementation process (Jordan and Richardson, 1987).

Although, much of the work on pluralism developed within America, and, in particular, from the political theorist Robert Dahl (1961), many supporters of the theory have advocated its relevance to contemporary British politics (Mackenzie, 1955; Mckenzie, 1958). In the mid-1960s, for example, Beer (1965) noted that in Britain a collectivist theory of representation was developing, whereby pressure groups were afforded a greater role in the formulation of policies. According to Beer (1965), as government sought to manage the economy they were forced into bargaining relations with employer associations, whose consent and co-population they required. Similarly, “the evolution of the welfare state stimulated action by organised groups of consumers, such as tenants, parents and patients. The desire by governments to retain office led them to consult and bargain with these consumer groups in an attempt to win support and votes” (Ham and Hill, 1993:27). Accordingly, Jordan and Richardson (1987) argue that Britain is a ‘post-parliamentary democracy’ where pressure groups will influence policy from the initial point of formulation through implementation and final enactment at the ground level.

In this context, pluralist theories of the state would appear to provide some explanation for the increasing role and influence that environmental agencies and ENGOs are currently enjoying within the formulation of UK agri-environmental policy (see section 3.4.2). Government agencies, such as MAFF and the FRCA would be treated as lobbying groups alongside ENGOs, and the apparent power relations that exist between these organisations would be explained in terms of “a political market place where what a group achieves depends on its resources and its ‘decibel rating’” (Ham and Hill, 1993:29). According to Grant (1989:26-27), however, “pluralist theory often seems to reflect a more open, fragmented political system than applies in the case of Britain ... Such a picture has considerable validity in the US with its autonomous executive agencies, but less so in Britain”. Instead, it is advocated that however fragmented the British system may appear, some government agencies will always possess more power than others, and some pressure groups will always enjoy closer relations with policy makers (Winter, 1996). Thus, as some political theorists have gone on to suggest, theories of corporatism may provide a more useful framework in which to understand and analyse the British state system.

Corporatism

According to Winter (1996:19), “corporatism has become one of the most persuasive theories attempting to explain the complex relationships that surround modern government”. It has been defined as:

“a mode of policy formation in which formally designated interest associations are incorporated within the process of authoritative decision making. As such they are officially recognised by the state not merely as interest intermediaries but as co-responsible ‘partners’ in governance and social guidance” (Schmitter, 1981 in Cox et al., 1987:80).

Advancing pluralist notions of pressure group involvement, corporatism thus advocates that a strong alliance will be developed between Ministers, civil servants and the leaders of pressure groups, where “the latter are given a central role in the policy making process in exchange for exerting pressure upon their members to conform with government decisions” (Jones, 1991:506). In this context, interest groups are regarded as an extension of government. They are actively involved in official decision making activities and may influence the implementation of policy (Middlemas, 1986; Panitch, 1980).

As discussed, theories of corporatism have been extremely useful in helping to conceptualise policy actor relations within the development and implementation of agricultural policies. The post-war corporatist relationship between MAFF and the NFU proved to be extremely influential in the formulation of productivist policies. The NFU was seen to obtain insider status within the elite agricultural policy community, in return for ensuring member compliance to policy maker objectives (Self and Storing, 1962; Cox et al., 1987; Smith, 1990). Today, it is thought that theories of corporatism have been extended into the implementation of post-productivist policies, where FWAG is believed to enjoy close working relations with MAFF and ADAS/FRCA advisors and POs. While this particular issue remains a subject for further investigation within this research, corporatist theories would appear to provide a useful framework in which to analyse the relationship of the agri-environmental implementer with various actors operating within the locality.

Although many scholars continue to debate the utility and exclusivity⁵ of state-society theories, political-economy analysts are united in asserting that the nature of the state will influence and

⁵ Many scholars have advocated that despite distinct variation in these theoretical conceptions of the State no one single theory provides an adequate analytical framework in which to analyse the role of the state within public policy (Cawson, 1981, Cloke and Little, 1987, 1990, Dearlove, 1991, Ham and Hill, 1993). Winter (1996:21) draws attention to the complementary nature of certain aspects of state theories, explaining, for example, that the “acceptance of the corporatist framework ... does not preclude the possibility of retaining elements of marxist theory (see, for example, Panitch 1980, 1981) or of elite theory”. Concomitantly, it is generally accepted that pluralism and corporatism are closely aligned, often interlinking as a combined theory

shape the decisions and actions of policy actors, such as the local-level implementer. Political-economy theorists do not deny that within the state street-level bureaucrats may greatly influence the policy process (see Pahl, 1977). However, they contend that given the nature of the state, specific macro-structural constraints will determine the interests, objectives and political power of the street-level bureaucrat. Further, drawing upon the work of central-local relations and inter-organisational studies (see Rhodes, 1981; 1988; Laffin, 1986), political-economy theorists advocate that beneath fundamental state constraints, the organisational and inter-organisational setting of policy makers and implementers will greatly determine their political preferences and activities (Cloke and Little, 1987, 1990). As Cloke (1987:25) advocates:

"The primary constraints on ... policy options are ... the restrictions imposed by the state society relationship. Underneath this primary constraint, however, occurs a series of more recognisable secondary restrictions, further constraining the already delimited range of options open to policy-makers ... these constraints occur in [organisational and inter-organisational relations]".

Organisational and Inter-organisational Analyses

There has been a tendency for scholars to analyse the influence of organisational setting on policy implementation, in terms of central-local relations (Goldsmith, 1986; Lewis and Wallace, 1984; Cloke and Hanrahan, 1984), in particular, central control over resource allocation to local agencies implementing policy (Hoggart, 1984; Saunders, 1985). However, contemporary political scientists have sought to move away from the institutional emphasis prevalent in central-local studies and adopt an inter-organisational viewpoint, focusing upon the notion of policy communities and policy networks (Cloke, 1986). According to Rhodes (1981, 1988), this has primarily emerged in response to the increasing number of actors involved in public policy, both at the centre and in the locality. The simple policy hierarchy suggested in Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy is increasingly irrelevant in contemporary society. Rather than three main actors being involved in the policy process, (i.e. policy-makers, street-level bureaucrats and recipients of policy), Barrett and Fudge (1981) argue that, a multiplicity of actors seek to negotiate and bargain with one another in order to further their own interests in the policy-action continuum. Although, this has been addressed at the state level through theories of pluralism and corporatism, recent developments within the political-economy approaches to policy have advocated that analyses of policy actors within their organisational and inter-organisational contexts would find advantages in studying the decisions, actions and power relations of actors in relation to the existence of policy communities and/or policy networks (Rhodes, 1981, 1988). As Judge (1993:120) argued, in the British context:

(see Williamson, 1989).

"The practice of [British] government in the 1980s continued to accommodate organised groups in the process of policy making and the response of British political scientists was to invoke a more appropriate empirical-descriptive theory - this time focusing upon policy communities and policy networks".

Policy Communities

Emulating elitist theories of the state, policy communities have been defined as networks that exist around specific policy sectors, and which primarily comprise actors of hierarchical authority, such as ministers, key civil servants and the leaders of key interest groups (Knox and Cullen, 1981; Laffin, 1986; Rhodes, 1988). Centred around the major functional interests of government, policy communities cut across the traditional territorial central-local divide that dominated earlier studies of inter-organisational relations (Laffin, 1986). As a community, they are characterised by stable relationships, a continuity of restrictive membership, insulation from other networks and the general public, a high degree of vertical interdependence and limited horizontal articulation (Beer, 1976, Laffin, 1986).

Accordingly, policy communities tend to be highly elitist in nature. Access into a community is limited to participants whose class background and political personality is generally favourable to the highly structured and conservative world view of key policy actors (Knox and Cullen, 1981; Self, 1985). As Laffin (1986:211) argued:

"... policy communities are based on shared beliefs and are exclusive, new entrants have to satisfy stringent entry criteria such as having high professional standing or occupying a senior organisational position".

Sharing similar values, beliefs and interests, bargaining relations are expected to be limited within a policy community. An internal order will predominate as participants share an understanding of the policy problems and priorities, illustrated by the development of a shared common culture within the community (Laffin, 1986; Winter, 1996).

Despite the low hierarchical position occupied by local-level implementers, chapter 2 outlined how street-level bureaucrats are often admitted into elite policy communities. As professional bureaucrats, policy implementers serve as an accredited source of new knowledge for policy makers which, according to Laffin (1986:15), "can endow the holder with influence that may substitute for the holder's lack of organisational or political power relative to other actors and vice versa". Thus, where an elitist and cohesive community exists around a specific policy, 'street-level' professionals are expected not only to be enrolled within the policy community, but, additionally, to influence the interests and objectives advocated by policy actors. However, where policy networks are formed, Rhodes (1981, 1988) argues that the power and

influence of implementers are curtailed, as a multiplicity of actors seek to bargain and negotiate with one another in an arena of unpredictable power relations.

Policy Networks

Policy networks are considered to be less integrated and elitist than policy communities. According to Rhodes (1988), policy networks develop as large groups of actors are brought together by a shared interest in a particular policy or issue. However, where policy communities develop a strong cohesive culture around these shared interests, policy networks remain loosely structured with actors maintaining individual and often diverging objectives. As Rhodes (1988:78) outlined:

“the distinctive features of this kind of network are its large number of participants and their limited degree of interdependence. Stability and continuity are at a premium, and the structure tends to be atomistic. Commonly, there is no single focal point at the centre with which other actors need to bargain for resources”.

Summarising policy networks, Marsh and Rhodes (1992) advocate that a large number of participants will be involved, encompassing a range of interests and objectives. Contact between policy actors will fluctuate in frequency and intensity, with new groups and actors continuously enrolling into the network. In terms of network cohesion, it is argued that a measure of agreement does exist between actors, but conflicts are ever present as each individual struggles for supremacy in order to implement their own objectives. Further, the distribution of resources within policy networks is considered to be limited. In this context, Marsh and Rhodes (1992) assert, that policy networks will be characterised by unequal powers reflecting unequal resources and unequal access. Thus, for participants of policy networks, influence on the policy process is expected to be a zero-sum game (Winter, 1996).

It is widely recognised that given this conceptualisation, policy networks provide an extremely useful compliment to pluralist and corporatist understandings of agri-environmental inter-actor relations (Jordan and Schubert, 1992; Winter, 1996). Where previously the agricultural policy process was dominated by the elitist farming community, it is acknowledged that contemporary agri-environmental policies are formulated within a policy network, characterised by a large number of actors, each with specific individual interests and objectives, but coming together within the political arena of agri-environmentalism (Frouws and Tatenhove, 1993).

As an advancement to Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy, therefore, political-economy theories, and, in particular, the concepts of pluralism, corporatism, and policy networks, evidently provide a useful framework in which to analyse the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer. While recognising that local-level implementers play an important role in the policy process, they place the implementer within their macro-social

environment and provide an understanding of how, for example, the agri-environmental implementer may act in relation to the plethora of 'new' agri-environmental advisors operating within the countryside.

3.5.2 Dualism of Structure and Agency

Despite their apparent utility there is growing concern amongst a number of contemporary policy analysts that political-economy theories are generally failing to recognise the role of the agent within their structural contexts (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1986, 1987; Long, 1990; Drinkwater, 1992; Law, 1992; Marsden et al., 1993). Although it is acknowledged that overemphasising the role and behaviour of the individual actor may draw one to the disputed concepts of methodological individualism, Marsden and Acre (1995) argue that political-economy theories have forced analysts to move to the extreme and advocate theories of structural determinism, thus, analysing structure and agency in terms of a unidirectional relationship where the former is perceived to constrain individual action. According to Giddens (1979, 1984), however, macro-processes can not be presumed to determine everything in an actor's decision making nexus. In reality, structural forms and processes may enter the existing life-worlds of the individuals and social groups affected, and, in turn, be received, defined and, in some cases, transformed by these same actors. Accordingly, structure and agency may exist in a continuous dialectical relationship, where they may both mutually constrain and enable the outcome of policy. This was clearly evident in Long's (1984, 1992) analysis of 'encounters at the interface' between rural producers and street-level bureaucrats. Long outlined how rural producers in Mexico took on board the government's policy to improve agricultural technology, but where the state bureaucrat sought to persuade the farmers to adopt specific technologies introduced by the government, Long observed how the farmers sought to adopt technologies that were entrenched within their cultural knowledge and experiences (see section 3.4.1). In the context of this structure-agency dualism, Long (1984, 1992) has also gone on to assert that, like the farmers, local-level implementers are autonomous decision-makers who will not readily accept the dictates of their macro-structural and agency contexts. Thus, as

"social actors ... [they] ... are not simply seen as disembodied social categories ... or passive recipients of ... [external structural or agency forces] ... but active participants which process information and strategize in their dealings with various local actors as well as with outside institutions and personnel" (Long, 1992:21).

Accordingly, the agri-environmental implementer can not be presumed to operate in accordance with the dictates of Lipsky's micro-sociological analysis or political-economy theories. Rather, the implementer may take on board and manipulate external structures and agencies in order to legitimise their own lifeworlds.

By bridging the traditional structure-agency dichotomy, and in turn recognising that all policy actors may redefine structural constraints, Long and Long (1992) have gone on to propose that the issue of power endemic to traditional bureaucratic studies and political-economy theories needs to be reappraised. Where, traditionally, political scientists have conceptualised power in relation to *a priori* definitions of structural and agency characteristics, Long (1984, 1992) asserts that by studying the interaction of different life worlds and the strategies developed by actors analysis may focus upon the way in which actors deal with and manipulate structural-agency constraints, rather than accepting externally imposed power relations.

Supporting Long's thesis, Latour (1986, 1987) has also been keen to overturn some of the common assumptions concerning power in the social sciences. Following Foucault (1973), Latour asserts that power should not be treated as something that one individual or organisation can be presumed to possess. Comparing a diffusion model of power, where actors derive power from a known central source, with a translation model, where power is obtained by enrolling many actors, Latour advocates that power should be seen as a consequence of action rather than a cause. Accordingly, it is only when actors ideas, perceptions and objectives are put into action by others that they are believed to be able to exert some form of power. Thus, as Murdoch and Clark (1994:121) contend:

"The 'powerful' are not those who simply 'hold' power, but are those who can enrol, convince and enlist others into [a] network".

Given this conceptualisation, Latour goes on to propose that analysts should move beyond traditional understandings of 'power' and 'society', where abstract social concepts are used to explain why actors do what they do, and instead focus on *how* actors construct and define society itself. Latour (1986) does not deny that society exists in the form of power, capital, class, hierarchies, professions and institutions, but he argues that by adopting such an 'ostensive definition of society' and analysing these structures as determinants of social action, "the practical details that make it possible for these entities to last for more than a minute will escape attention" (p277). Consequently, Latour (1986, 1987) advocates that analysts should seek to adopt a 'performative definition of society' where, abandoning *a priori* definitions of structure and agency, analysis may focus on *how* society is constructed and defined by social action itself. According to Law (1994), it is only by analysing how policy actors manipulate, persuade, convince and enrol structural and agency actors into their lifeworlds that analysts may be able to gain a greater understanding of the interplay between actors across the traditional structure-agency divide.

In seeking to conduct such a performative analysis, the following section outlines how the actor-network approach offers the social scientist a non-deterministic methodological

framework in which to analyse *how* power and society are constructed through the interactions and strategies of a myriad of actors seeking to legitimise their individual lifeworlds.

3.5.3 Actor-Network Approach

Developed mainly from a body of work conducted by a French school of sociologists (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1986, 1987, 1990; Law, 1991), the actor-network approach encapsulates Latour's performative sociology, where, abandoning *a priori* concepts and theories of society, it seeks to provide an epistemological and methodological framework in which to analyse how power relations and structures are defined by actors as they construct networks of associations with one another. Central to the approach is a simple analytical principle - 'follow the actors' as they construct their worlds from what is around them, and observe how the actors seek to persuade and enrol others into their lifeworlds. By analysing how actors create linkages with one another, and how some actors impose their interests and objectives on others, Callon et al. (1985) assert that the constitution of society and the distribution of power relations may be fully understood.

Drawing upon a study of scallop fishermen in St Brieuc Bay, France, Callon (1986) has developed a detailed exemplar of how power relations may be defined by actors as they seek to legitimise their own lifeworlds through a process of translation, involving persuasion, enrollment, definition and representation. According to Callon there are four main stages of translation, "during which the identity of actors, the possibility of interaction and the margins of manoeuvre are negotiated and delimited" (Callon, 1986:203). During the first stage, *problematisation*, Callon (1986) argues that an actor will try to make himself/herself indispensable to other actors by defining a problem in such a way that their knowledge becomes indispensable to a possible solution. In doing so, Law (1992) argues that actors may adopt different modes of discourse when seeking to enrol specific actors into their life worlds. Essentially, actors may construct their arguments using specific terminology, definitions and meanings which correspond to other actors' life-worlds, thus, persuading them of the personal benefits that may be achieved by enrolling in the lead actors' network. Once actors begin to recognise that their alliance with this main actor may be beneficial, Callon (1986) asserts that the leading actor will attempt to consolidate the emerging network by strengthening any associations that exist between actors. According to Callon (1986) and Latour (1986, 1987), this second stage of translation - *interressement* - may be achieved by drawing upon intermediaries, such as texts, empirical data, legislative documents, technical artefacts and statistical information. Latour (1987) goes on to argue that, by utilising such resources, the lead actor may move away from previous rhetorical strategies, to strengthen their arguments through one of the most powerful tools, the visual display.

In this context, the actor-network approach advocates that unlike previous conceptual approaches, no distinction should be made between human actors and structural resources. According to Callon (1986), the lead actor will not seek to distinguish between a human or non-human entity, all that is of concern to the lead actor is whether a certain entity will help them to strengthen their arguments. Within the actor-network approach, therefore, an 'actor' is considered to be any human or non-human resource which is drawn upon and enrolled into a network. As Hindess (1986:115) clarifies, "an actor is a locus of decision and action where the action is in some sense a consequence of the actor's decisions". It is not until the third stage of translation, *enrollment*, that agencies and structures are defined.

During *enrollment*, the lead actor will seek to define the roles and relationships that each actor will play within the network. According to Callon (1986), this may involve a set of complex negotiations between actors over how their identities are to be defined. However, as Callon (1986) goes on to argue, such negotiations will be dependent upon the strength of those actors that were drawn upon during the stage of *interessement*. Returning to these supporting intermediaries, the lead actor may attempt to mitigate negotiations and, thus, define the actors in relation to their own perceptions and objectives. Achieving this, Callon (1986) argues that, the lead actor may enter into the fourth stage of translation - *mobilisation* - whereupon he/she may successfully turn himself/herself into a spokesperson for the network of actors who have become enrolled into the lead actor's arguments and objectives (Fig. 3.4). Summarising Callon's (1986) study of the evolution of actor-networks, Marsden et al. (1993:144) state that:

"translation is [thus] a process whereby various disparate social entities and actors are brought together within a network, for which a strategically placed representative speaks. It is through this process that actors or entities gain identity and interest. These are not pre-given but are evoked as the links in the chain are forged".

According to Callon (1986), however, the power and influence of an individual actor may often be a difficult and protracted process to achieve and maintain. In his study of the scallop fishermen in St Brieuc Bay, Callon found that, within a network of relations established by three scientists, fishermen in the Bay refused to accept the scientists' claims for a halt to fishing within the Bay. By continuing with their trade the fishermen were seen to disavow the lead actors (i.e. the scientists), bringing an end to the original network of actors. In the light of this, Callon (1986) believed that new alliances may subsequently form and new networks become established, within which, those actors that were enrolled in the previous network may be re-defined in accordance with the objectives of the new representative (e.g. the fishermen). Accordingly, actor-network theorists argue that, constructing networks, establishing power relations and defining both agency and structure are not straightforward processes which can be discerned through *a priori* definitions and theories (Latour, 1987).

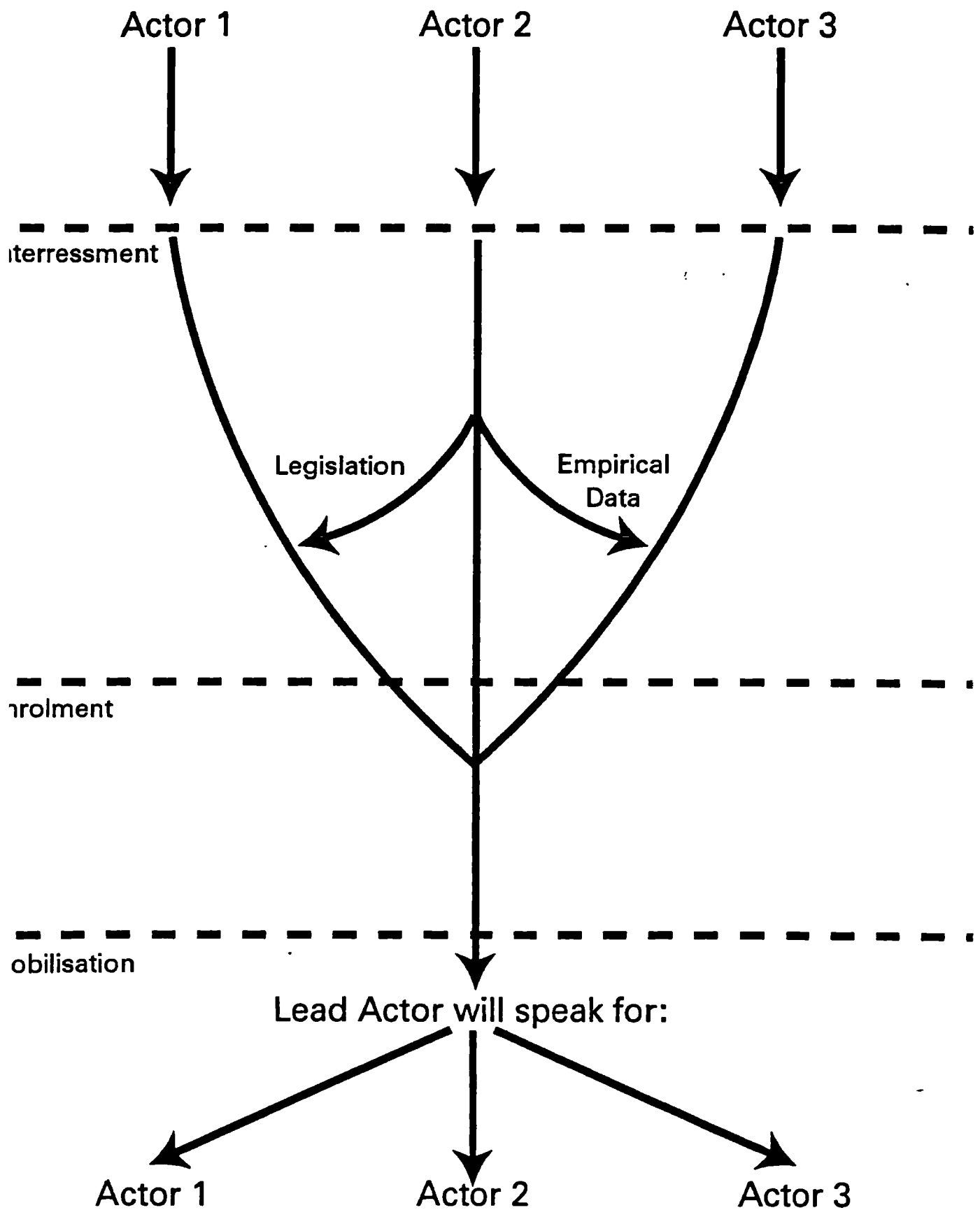


Fig. 3.4. The Process of Enrolment (Source: adapted from Callon, 1986)

Rather, they will be determined through a dynamic and interactive process of associations that may span a variety of spatial and temporal scales. As Callon (1986:224) explains:

“understanding what sociologists generally call power relationships means describing the way in which actors are defined, associated and simultaneously obliged to remain faithful to their alliances. The repertoire of translation ... permits an exploration of how a few obtain the right to express and to represent the many silent actors of the social and natural worlds they have mobilised”.

In recent years, an increasing number of social scientists have turned to Callon’s sociology of translation in order to understand how a myriad of actors, from the global to the local interact and establish power relations with one another (Murdoch, 1995; Ahson, 1997). Of particular concern to this thesis are two specific ESRC funded research programmes which have applied and advocated the use of an actor-network approach in analyses of the social, economic and political restructuring of the UK’s countryside. First, in their study of the changing construction of the rural land development process, Marsden et al. (1993) identified that, at the local, national and transitional levels, economic actors, regulatory planning systems and local political actors are all involved in shaping and determining the future of specific developments within the wider countryside. Given these observations, Marsden et al. (1993:129) went on to consider complex conceptual questions:

“What kinds of relationships might we expect to find between economic and political actors operating at the national and transitional levels, and such actors operating locally? How do the forces of economic change interact with regulatory powers to condition local outcomes? What scope do locally based actors have to resist or significantly alter such outcomes?”.

Recognising that traditional sociological theories provide little conceptualisation of the interplay between structures and agencies at any spatial scale, Marsden et al. (1993) drew upon Callon’s sociology of translation in order to fully understand the power relations of actors across a spectrum of traditionally fixed dichotomous categories, such as the technical, economic, political, social, local, and global. While Marsden et al. (1993) were keen to assert that Callon’s analysis should only ever be treated as an “insightful exemplar” of how power relations and networks of associations are constructed, they conclude that:

“this methodology ... [of actor-networks] ... seems to us essential if we are to understand rural change in an increasingly differentiated countryside. We cannot simply ‘read off’ action from some pre-given rural social structure or rural economy. ... We must ‘follow’ actors as they enter into and construct networks of social relations. These networks give rise to the processes of economic, social and political change that form the rural and provide the context for the next round of restructuring” (p190-191).

In the second ESRC research programme⁶ that focused on ‘countryside change, farming and pollution’, Lowe et al. (1997) emulated the arguments of Marsden et al. (1993) concerning the applicability and utility of the actor-network approach within contemporary rural studies. According to Clark and Lowe (1992), a whole host of structures and actors are entwined within the process of farm pollution regulation. “There are entities known as farmers, advisers, pollution inspectors, scientific researchers, technicians, civil servants, farms, laboratories, cows, wheat, slurry, effluent tanks, isoproturon, silage, wild oats, oxygen meter, fines ...and so on” (p21). In this context, Lowe et al. (1997) went on to assert that, in seeking to analyse the regulatory process of farm pollution, they must seek to adopt a methodology that would enable them to “encompass this assemblage of actors and the interactions that take place between them”. Following Marsden et al. (1993), the PATCH team chose to adopt the actor-network approach, whereupon they followed the key actors involved in the farm pollution story: farmers, pollution inspectors and advisers - analysing how they sought to persuade, enrol and represent one another in the implementation of pollution regulation. Having conducted their empirical analysis, Lowe et al. (1997) went on to outline how Callon’s sociology of translation had provided an extremely useful exemplar for understanding how farm pollution actors interact and establish power relations throughout the regulatory process.

Drawing upon the experiences of these rural research studies, it would appear that where this thesis seeks to analyse the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer within their micro and macro-societal contexts, the actor-network approach offers an epistemological and methodological framework that stretches far beyond the conceptual boundaries of Lipsky’s theory of street-level bureaucracy. Adopting a non-deterministic approach to structural constraints and agency relations, the actor-network approach strips away Lipsky’s predefined concepts of street-level bureaucrats’ interests, autonomy, decision-making strategies and relationships with their bureaucratic superiors and recipients of policy. This is not to deny that the street-level bureaucrat is an autonomous and powerful actor. Empirical evidence supports Lipsky’s theorisation (see section 2.5). However, by ‘wiping the slate clean’ of predefined theories and concepts, the actor-network approach may help analysis to understand *how* the agri-environmental implementer interacts with the myriad of ‘new’ actors involved in the implementation of the UK’s agri-environmental schemes. Further, *how* power relations are constructed and distributed within the agri-environmental implementation process. As Latour (1986:273) explains:

“to understand power, one must examine how actors enrol, convince and enlist others into their life worlds”.

⁶This is the Pollution, Agriculture and Technology Change programme (PATCH) It was conducted by researchers at University College London, the University of Bath, and, the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester.

Thus, focusing upon concepts of persuasion and enrollment within a non-deterministic framework, the actor-network approach offers this research an opportunity to 'throw the analytical net' wider than Lipsky's micro-sociological analysis of the street-level bureaucrat, and, observe and examine a multiplicity of associations between those structural and agency actors that may be involved in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes.

3.6 Conclusion

Drawing together the various sections of this chapter, it is evident that considerable conceptual and theoretical questions have been raised concerning the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer. As the chapter initially outlined, contemporary agricultural policy makers have placed considerable emphasis on the role of the FRCA PO in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales. Given farmers' innate conservatism and scepticism toward new agricultural technologies and policies, MAFF recognise that many farmers will be reluctant to participate in the schemes. However, they insist that, as on-farm advisors and implementers of the 'new' agri-environmental schemes, the POs have successfully persuaded and encouraged many farmers to implement the voluntary schemes. Despite support from historical literature and contemporary commentators' however, it was evident from existing research studies that the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer is open to question.

As the chapter reveals there are a number of actors involved in the formulation and implementation of agri-environmental policy, who may potentially influence the outcome and 'success' of MAFF's voluntary agri-environmental schemes. It is widely acknowledged, for example, that farmers are powerful autonomous decision-makers who may accept or reject the notion of agri-environmental participation. Further, the potential power of 'new' agri-environmental actors was revealed. In recent years, it is widely recognised that, with the advent of post-productivism, the elite agricultural policy community has been forced to open up to new interest groups, most notably environmental agencies and ENGOs. At the national level of agri-environmental policy making, contemporary environmentalists currently enjoy close working relations with agricultural policy makers. They are frequently consulted wherever new schemes are developed or existing schemes reviewed, and, in some cases, they have evidently become active policy formulators, designing and administering new schemes on behalf of MAFF. At the local level, the extent to which new pressure groups are involved in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes is less conclusive. However, as the chapter discusses, a number of research studies have revealed that a network of 'new' agri-environmental advisors has emerged within the countryside, offering on-farm conservation advice to farmers and landowners who appear willing to accept and implement their advice. In seeking to analyse the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer, therefore, it

was recognised that analysis must examine the FRCA PO in relation to all actors operating in the agri-environmental implementation process. As the chapter argues, failure to do so will prevent the research from gaining an accurate representation of how influential the agri-environmental implementer is.

In this context, the applicability of Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy was brought into question. Despite Lipsky's detailed theorisation of local-level implementers, it is asserted that the micro-sociological perspective adopted by Lipsky, would not facilitate the research to holistically analyse the agri-environmental implementer in relation to their micro and macro-social contexts. As an alternative analytical framework the actor-network approach appears to offer the research a useful conceptual and methodological framework in which to analyse the role and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer. In seeking to fully understand inter-actor relations it asserts that analysts need to abandon traditional theories of society and instead seek to analyse *how* individual actors, such as the agri-environmental implementer, interpret and react to external agency and structural factors. Further, how they construct networks of association with other actors. How these relations are maintained or contested. It is only by analysing *how* actors interact with one another that analysts are believed to be able to gain a greater understanding of how actors may gain power and influence over others.

In seeking to adopt the actor-network approach in an analysis of the role and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer, questions are raised as to the methodology by which the research may analyse how the agri-environmental implementer interprets and defines external structures and agencies; how they construct networks of associations with other agri-environmental actors; and how they may gain power and influence over the agri-environmental implementation process. As the following chapter details, the actor-network approach has outlined a methodology in which actors may be 'followed' as they construct associations with others and establish power relations.

PART III

METHODOLOGY

Following the debate within Part II, where it was concluded that the actor-network approach may provide the research with a useful conceptual framework in which to holistically analyse the role and relative influence of the individual agri-environmental implementer, this section of the thesis turns to the methodological principles of the actor-network approach and seeks to outline how they were applied within an analysis of FRCA POs. In doing so, Chapter 4 provides a justification of the case study areas selected for the research and details the methodological processes by which quantitative and qualitative information concerning the role and inter-actor relations of the FRCA PO was collated.

Chapter 4

Applying The Actor-Network Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In seeking to adopt the actor-network approach as an appropriate conceptual framework in which to analyse the role and relative influence of the FRCA PO a methodology advocated by actor-network theorists was applied in two case study areas - the Breckland and Cotswold Hills Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs). This chapter seeks to outline the actor-network methodology adopted in this study. In addition, it provides a detailed justification of the study areas chosen, and outlines how interviews were conducted within the two areas. The chapter then goes on to outline the decision to adopt a quantitative postal questionnaire within the research. Particular attention is paid to the structure of the questionnaire and the questions that were asked in order to elicit information that would assist in the analysis of the POs' agri-environmental implementation network.

4.2 Actor-Network Methodology

Methodologically the actor-network approach has its roots within Glaser and Strauss' (1967) Grounded Theory. Abandoning *a priori* definitions and ideas, actor-network theorists (e.g. Callon, 1986; Latour, 1986, 1987) advocate that researchers should inductively follow those actors both enrolling and being enrolled in actor-networks so as to establish how power relations and structural processes are defined and contested. In doing so, Callon (1986) argues that the researcher should remain neutral throughout the process of observation and data collection. They should refrain "from judging the way in which the actors analyse the society which surrounds them" (Callon, 1986:200), and should not define actors or power relations if these are still being negotiated and constructed. Instead, the researcher should remain sensitive to the meanings and definitions that actors ascribe to the world in which they live (Marsden et al., 1993; Morris and Andrews, 1995). Actors should be left to speak for themselves, to reveal their own ideas, definitions, objectives and associations with other actors (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1986, 1987).

In seeking to follow this actor-network methodology, there has been a propensity amongst researchers to adopt ethnographic and qualitative methodologies such as semi-structured interviews, case studies, oral histories and participant or non-participant observational

techniques (Marsden et al., 1993; Lowe et al., 1997). It is widely acknowledged that such qualitative methodologies facilitate an intensive analysis of actors' socio-cultural definitions, objectives and experiences of their macro-structural environment (Walker, 1985; Burgess, 1984; McCracken, 1988; Hamel et al., 1993; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). As Ackroyd and Hughes' (1992:132) eloquently explain, they enable analyses of:

"... the interactive, interpretative and negotiated basis of social life, created and sustained by the meanings actors use to make sense of and interpret the world in which they live ... the social structure is seen more as a kind of multitude of scenic processes, constantly moving and changing as actors negotiate and renegotiate their course of action. An essential part of this is ... [that they] ... see the society from the point of view of the actor concerned since it is this which shapes his or her course of action".

However, while the methodologies of ethnographers and qualitative researchers assist the actor-network theorist, ethnographers have highlighted a major discrepancy in the actor-network methodology. Throughout the analysis of actor-networks, Callon (1986) asserts that the researcher must remain distant and agnostic to the research field. As Drinkwater (1992:368) argues, however, "it is inconsistent not to acknowledge the ... active nature of the researcher in shaping fieldwork encounter ... the researcher plays ...[a central role] ... in the selection and interpretation of field material". This has been further supported by many ethnographers who assert that researchers cannot be neutral within the field (McCracken, 1988; Foddy, 1993; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Revill and Seymour, 1996). The "researcher is the instrument" in qualitative field research (Patton, 1990:14). They are integral actors in the construction of actor-networks and must, therefore, question and reflect upon their own positionality, ideas and objectives in relation to the respondents and research process. As Outhwaite (1985:29) argues:

"we cannot simply record in an objective and value free way the practices and beliefs of other human beings ... it is precisely the encounter between the social scientist's own beliefs and practices and those of the people he or she is studying which makes up whatever understanding we can have of another social reality".

In this context, ethnographic and qualitative researchers have highlighted the importance of incorporating reflexive accounts into field research. These accounts often include detailed descriptions of the researcher's feelings during the period of data collection, their interpretation of the respondent, interview location and general perceptions on the relationship between themselves as the researcher and the researched. Indeed, despite Callon's (1986) reluctance to acknowledge researchers as integral actors within emerging networks, many researchers adopting the actor-network approach have supported their qualitative methodologies with reflexive accounts (Ward, 1994, Revill and Seymour, 1996) - an action which is endorsed in this research.

4.3 Applying the Actor-Network Approach in the Analysis of the FRCA PO

Following Callon's (1986) actor-network methodology, in conjunction with the principles of reflexivity, the research sought to conduct an in-depth qualitative analysis of the role and relative influence that the FRCA PO possesses in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales. In doing so, a case study approach was adopted where analysis focused upon one UK agri-environmental scheme - the ESA scheme, and in turn two specific ESAs - the Breckland ESA and the Cotswold Hills ESA.

4.3.1 Case Study Areas

Faced with an extensive analytical subject, it has been common practice for many researchers to narrow their focus of study and analyse a specific case within the research sample. In doing so, it has been widely advocated that the case study approach is one of the most suitable methods to use when conducting in-depth qualitative analyses of a large sample. Indeed, Hamel et al. (1993:39) have gone as far to assert that "the case study approach has proven to be in complete harmony with the three key works that characterise any qualitative method: describing, understanding and explaining". As such, the case study serves as "the most complete and detailed sort of presentation of the subject under investigation", which has been made possible "by giving special attention to totalising in the observation, reconstruction and analysis of the objects under study" (Zonabend, 1992:52).

Despite its advantages, however, it is widely acknowledged that the case study approach is beset with many methodological problems. According to Hamel et al. (1993) the notion of bias and subjectivity are thought, for example, to be inherent features of a methodological approach which, to a large degree, is dependent on the perceptions and decisions of the researcher who, in most cases, will ultimately decide on which case studies will be chosen for investigation. Moreover, concern has been widely expressed as to the extent to which many case studies fail to represent the wider sample under investigation. In this context, Hamel et al. (1993) assert that when adopting a case study approach researchers must accept that "the scope of the study is only relative to that case, and, accordingly, can only be considered microscopic. From this view point, the case study only permits the understanding of a single facet that is intrinsic to the case under investigation". Indeed, in selecting the case studies for this research it was acknowledged that the analysis would be specific to the agri-environmental implementer within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. From these case studies conclusions may be made concerning the wider implications of the research, but it must be stressed that these will be largely speculative in nature (see Chapter 10).

Justification of Case Study Selection

Of the six agri-environmental schemes currently implemented by the FRCA PO in England and Wales, the ESA scheme was chosen as a case study owing to its established history in the development of UK and European agri-environmental policy (see Table 1.1). As Chapter 3 outlined, the UK's BGMCS effectively acted as a prototype for the national ESA scheme which set out the principles of voluntarism and zonal targeting which was later to be encapsulated within EU Regulations 797/85/EEC and 2078 92/EEC (Whitby and Lowe, 1994). Today, the ESA scheme has maintained its status as the flagship of MAFF's commitment to agri-environmental objectives (Potter, 1998). In the recent Agriculture Select Committee Enquiry on 'ESAs and other UK agri-environmental schemes', MAFF (1996a) asserted, for example, that the budgetary allocation for ESAs in 1998/99 would total £50 million which, as Table 4.1 illustrates, is a large proportion of the UK's total agri-environmental budget.

Agri-Environmental Scheme	Expenditure Forecast for 1998/99 (£'000)
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	50, 429
Countryside Stewardship	27, 032
Nitrate Sensitive Areas	9, 906
Habitat Scheme	3, 769
Countryside Access Scheme	2, 285
Moorland Scheme	1, 768
Organic Aid Scheme	1, 155
TOTAL	96, 344

Table 4.1. MAFF Expenditure on agri-environmental schemes in England (MAFF, 1996a)

There are currently 38 ESAs in the UK, covering 986,027 hectares (MAFF, 1996a) (Fig. 4.1). The first eight were designated by MAFF in 1987, followed by three further 'rounds' of ESA designation in 1988, 1993 and more recently in 1994 (Table 4.2).

First Round of ESA Designations 1987	Second Round of ESA Designations 1988	Third Round of ESA Designations 1993	Fourth Round of ESA Designations 1994
Broads ESA	<i>Breckland</i> ESA	North Kent Marshes ESA	<i>Cotswold Hills</i> ESA
Pennine Dales ESA	Suffolk River Valleys ESA	Avon Valley ESA	Dartmoor ESA
Somerset Levels ESA	Clun ESA	South Wessex Downs ESA	Essex Coast ESA
South Downs ESA	North Peak ESA	Exmoor ESA	Blackdown Hills ESA
West Penwith ESA	Test Valley ESA	Lake District ESA	Shropshire Hills ESA
Breadalbane ESA	Machair Lands of Uists, Benbecula ESA	Isle of Anglesey ESA	South West Peak ESA
Loch Lomond ESA	Stewarty ESA	Radnor ESA	Upper Thames Tributaries ESA
Cambrian Mountains ESA	Eildon/Whitlaw ESA	Clwydian Range ESA	The Sperrins ESA
Mourne and Slieve Croob ESA	Lleyn Peninsula ESA	Preseli ESA	Slieve Gullion ESA
	Glens of Antrim ESA	West Fermanagh and Erne Lakeland ESA	

Table 4.2. Rounds of ESA Designation (Winter, 1996; MAFF, 1996a)

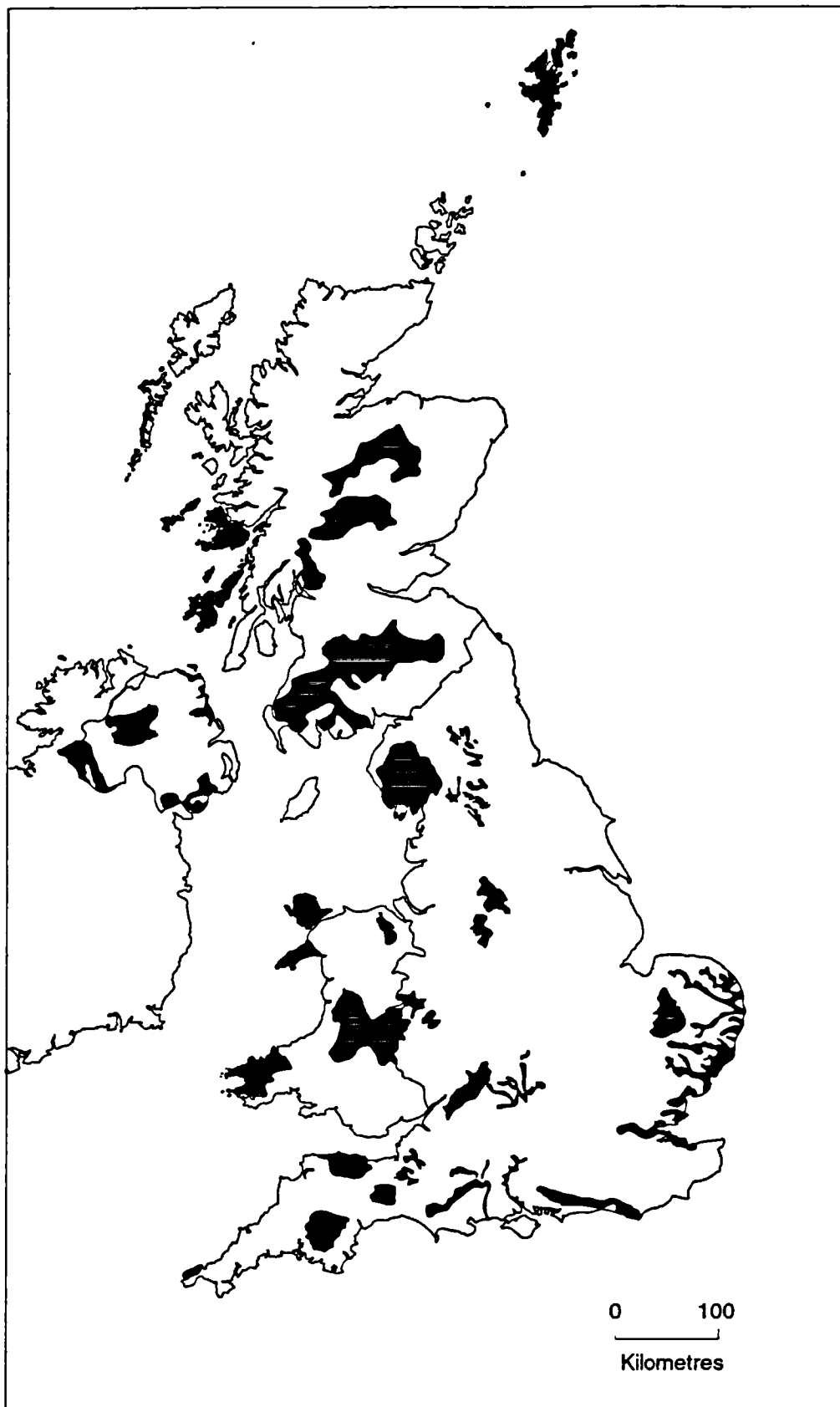


Fig. 4.1. Environmentally Sensitive Areas in the UK (Source: Whitby and Lowe, 1994)

Given the qualitative nature of the actor-network methodology, it was evident that, in seeking to analyse the role and influence of the FRCA PO in the implementation of an ESA scheme, a decision had to be made as to which of these ESAs the research should focus on. Initially the selection procedure was assisted by eliminating the ESAs located within Scotland and Northern Ireland as they are not implemented by FRCA POs. Rather than selecting just one of the 29 remaining ESAs as a case study, however, it was felt that by analysing two highly differentiated ESAs the empirical analysis may reveal interesting conclusions concerning the influence that different social, natural and political environments may have on the role and influence of the FRCA PO. In this context, the Cotswold Hills ESA (Fig. 4.2) and the Breckland ESA (Fig. 4.3) appeared to be suitable case studies.

It is recognised that ESAs are characteristically unique in terms of their objectives and prescriptions. As Table 1.1 outlined, each ESA was originally designated to safeguard the distinctive landscape, wildlife and historic interest of specific areas of the UK. However, as the following paragraphs will outline, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs are further highly differentiated in terms of their age, 'typology', administration, their interaction with other environmental designations, and participation levels, which all generate a multiplicity of questions concerning the possible influence that these factors may have on the way in which FRCA POs implement their respective schemes.

Age of ESA: Firstly, it is evident that the two ESAs are different in terms of their length of existence. As Table 4.1 outlines, the Breckland ESA was one of the early ESAs to be designated in 1988, while the Cotswold Hills ESA, designated in 1994 is a relatively new agri-environmental scheme. According to agricultural extension scientists there is a relatively strong correlation between the age of a policy and the implementary strategies adopted by agricultural advisors and extension workers (Benor et al., 1984; Farrington and Martin, 1987; Roling, 1988). As a new policy is formulated and introduced to a farming community, Benor et al. (1984) insist that the individual extension officer will initially seek to adopt a role as a public relations officer, promoting and marketing new policies, often to a sceptical policy target group. In doing so, extension officers are believed to adopt a number of promotional strategies, such as publishing and distributing promotional literature to farmers, organising regional and local farm meetings, arranging lectures, and conducting farm walks. Throughout the periodicity of a 'new' policy, it is recognised that agricultural extension officers may continue to utilise such promotional techniques. However, generally, van den Ban and Hawkins (1988) argue that, as time progresses, the promotional role of the individual extension officer will retreat and be replaced by a new more managerial role. In this context, agricultural extension officers are expected to devise and adopt a programme of activities geared towards the long-term management of agricultural policies. Within this programme, van den Ban and

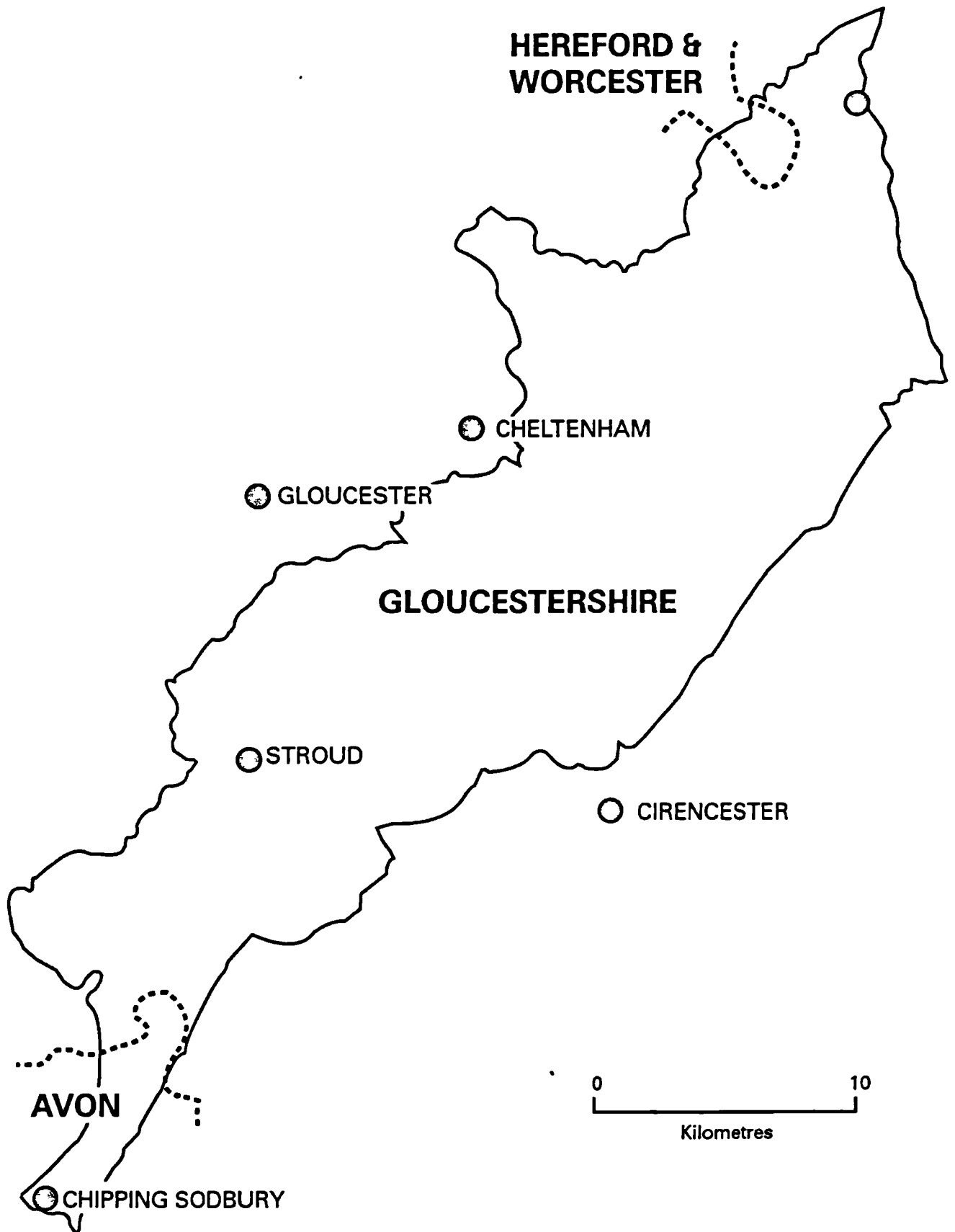


Fig. 4.2. Location of the Cotswold Hills ESA (Source: author)

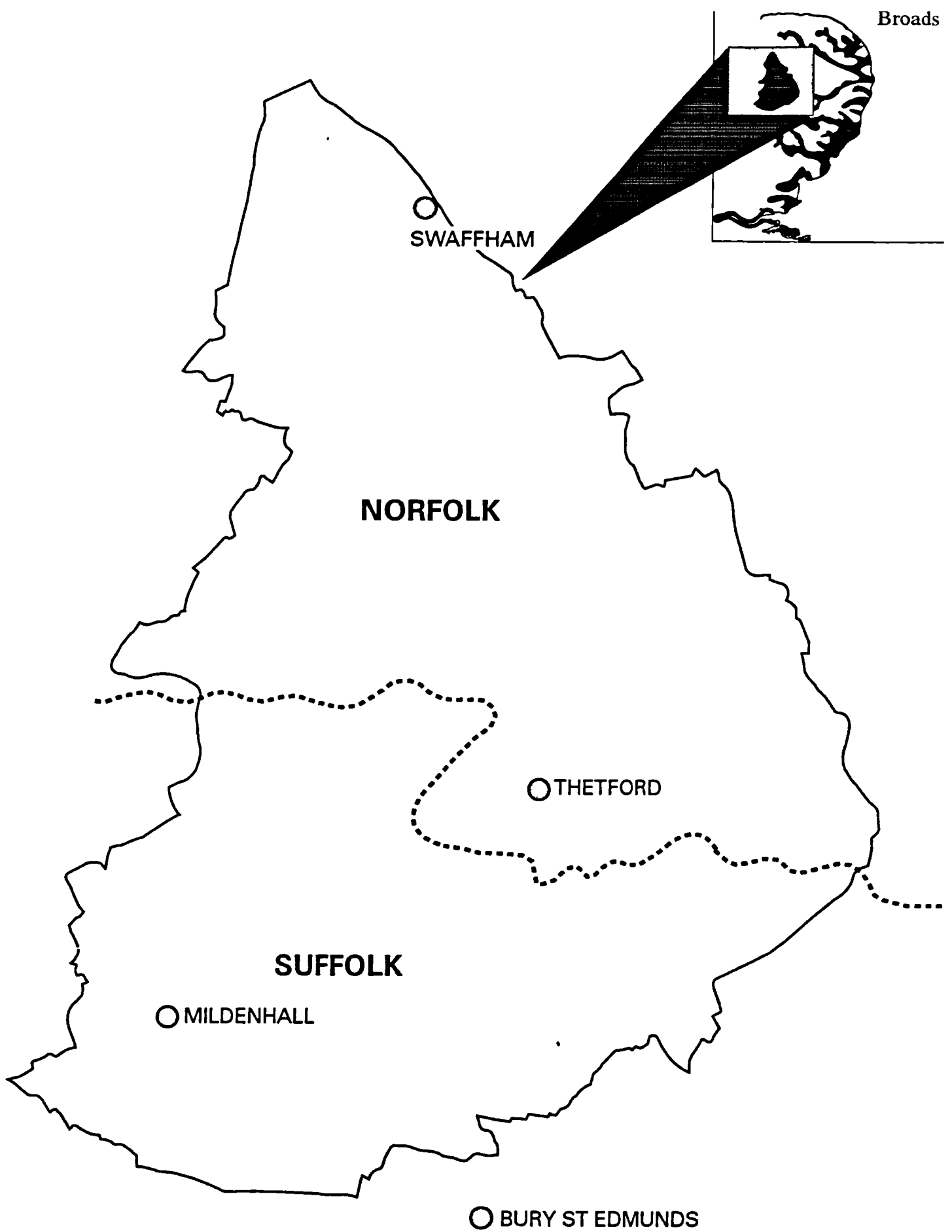


Fig. 4.3. Location of the Breckland ESA (Source: author)

Hawkins (1988) suggest that the extension officer may conduct individual farm visits where, on a regular basis, they may visit farmers in order to offer continuous on-going advice and to ensure that the individual farmer is implementing the policy as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Drawing upon this conceptual literature questions may be raised concerning the differentiation in the ages of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs and the influence that this may have on the implementation strategies adopted by the respective POs. For example, as the PO of a younger ESA, has the Cotswold Hills ESA PO adopted a greater promotional role than the Breckland ESA PO? Further, will the Cotswold Hills ESA PO be forced to adopt more promotional strategies, such as group meetings and farm walks, compared to the Breckland ESA PO?

'Typology': As questions are raised concerning the influence that the different ages of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA schemes may have on the agri-environmental implementation process, it is evident from previous research that differences between two ESAs in terms of the 'typology' of the schemes may further influence the decisions and actions of the individual agri-environmental implementer. Fundamentally, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs are two different 'types' of ESA schemes. The Breckland ESA may be classified as a 'part-farm' scheme, seeking to enrol specific habitats into ESA agreements by offering financial incentives to those farmers whose land encloses the targeted habitats - namely river valley grasslands and heathlands (see appendix 2). The Cotswold Hills ESA, on the other hand, is among one of the 'whole-farm' schemes currently implemented in the UK. Within this scheme any farmer or landowner with over 0.25 hectares may enter into an agreement with MAFF to farm all of their land within the ESA in accordance with pre-specified environmentally sensitive practices. Although farmers within the Cotswold Hills ESA may agree to undertake more demanding conservation or restoration practices on specific areas of their land, the ESA scheme does not set out to target individual habitats in the same way as the Breckland ESA scheme (see appendix 2).

According to Wilson (1997), the typology of an individual scheme may influence the implementation strategies adopted by scheme administrators and implementers. In his study of the Cambrian Mountains (CM) ESA Wilson (1997) found, for example, that given the targeted nature of the 'part-farm' scheme, the PO set out to specifically enrol and advise farmers whose land fell within the ESA habitat target areas - most notably, 'semi-natural rough grazing', broad-leaved woodland and hay meadows. According to Wilson (1997), this invariably involved the POs targeting the larger farms within the Cambrian Mountains, as the larger farms evidently possessed "larger areas of non-intensively used farmland, i.e. land eligible for the CM ESA scheme" (p207). Where POs are in charge of implementing 'whole-farm' schemes,

such as the Cotswold Hills ESA, Wilson (1997) goes on to infer that a different set of implementation strategies may be adopted by the FRCA POs. Implementing schemes that do not seek to target specific habitats, the POs may not have any recourse to target individual farmers, but is this the case? Do the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs adopt different implementation strategies in accordance with the typology of the individual schemes? Does the Breckland ESA PO, for example, set out to specifically target those farmers with areas of heathland and/or river valley grassland on their land, while the Cotswold Hills ESA PO, in charge of implementing a whole-farm scheme has no need to target specific habitats and/or farmers? In short, how does the nature of the agri-environmental scheme influence the decisions and actions of the individual ESA PO?

Administration: As differences in the age and typology of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs raise questions concerning the role and influence of the ESA POs, the differential administrative structure of the two ESAs leads analysis to further question the contexts in which the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs implement their respective schemes. As Chapter 3 discussed, each ESA is implemented by an FRCA PO who advises farmers eligible to participate in the schemes, and who manages the schemes on behalf of MAFF by ensuring that participants adhere to the schemes' prescriptions. However, wherever an ESA covers an extensive area and/or there are a large number of agri-environmental participants, the individual PO may possess administrative support in the form of assistant project officers (APOs) (see Chapter 5 for detailed discussion). As an ESA with a relatively high percentage of participants (approximately 70%), the Cotswold Hills ESA, for example, is currently implemented by a team of POs, consisting of one PO and five APOs (White, 1996). In comparison, the Breckland ESA, supporting a much smaller percentage of agri-environmental participants (approximately 23%) is implemented by only one FRCA PO (White, 1996). Given such administrative differentiation questions can be raised as to how this may shape the role and influence that the individual Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs can exert within the implementation of their respective schemes. With the advisory and administrative support of five APOs, has the Cotswold Hills ESA PO been able to persuade and advise many more farmers to participate in the ESA scheme than if operating alone? Further, how has the Cotswold Hills ESA accommodated the role and activities of the APOs? Has the Cotswold Hills ESA PO adopted specific implementation strategies that enable a team of POs, rather than an individual officer, to implement the ESA scheme? Likewise, how does the Breckland ESA PO operate as a sole PO? Does this influence the strategies that the PO adopts to implement the Breckland ESA scheme? Is the PO ever forced to seek assistance from other sources, and if so how does this influence the network of actors in which the ESA PO operates?

Environmental Designations: As Chapter 3 outlined in detail, it is of further interest to this research to analyse the presence and influence of ‘new’ agri-environmental actors within the agri-environmental implementation process. In particular, the research seeks to analyse the influence that local environmental agencies and ENGOs have on the role and relative influence of the individual FRCA PO. Have environmentalists, for example, eroded the power of the PO by directly influencing farmers’ agri-environmental decision-making strategies or, like their national counterparts, have they constructed a role as a local environmental advisor whom the FRCA PO will call upon for help and assistance in implementing the individual agri-environmental schemes? In order to address these questions, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs are suitable case study areas given the number of environmental agencies and ENGOs who may, potentially, be involved in the agri-environmental implementation process. As Figs. 4.4 and 4.5 outline, there are a number of environmental designations situated within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA boundaries. Both ESAs support SSSIs and County Wildlife Sites, and it is evident that National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are situated within the ESAs. Through their administration of these environmental designations, it can be anticipated that groups such as English Nature and County Wildlife Trusts will, to some extent, be involved with the ESA schemes (see section 3.4.2). In their evidence to the recent Agriculture Select Committee enquiry, MAFF (1996a) asserted that it is a duty of the PO to liaise with the appropriate environmental organisations wherever an ESA agreement coincides with an existing environmental designation, but in what form will this liaison take place? Will the environmental agencies and ENGOs offer advice to the ESA POs, or, during this liaison, will they take on a more active role in the implementation and administration of those ESA agreements coinciding with existing environmentally protected areas?

While the existence of environmental designations common to both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs raise questions concerning the role of environmentalists within the agri-environmental implementation process, there are evidently some differences between the two ESAs in terms of the quantity and specificity of existing environmental sites, which raise further questions in relation to the role and influence of local environmental organisations within the implementation of individual agri-environmental schemes. As Figs. 4.4 and 4.5 illustrate, the Breckland ESA supports a substantially larger area and number of SSSIs and NNRs than the Cotswold Hills ESA. Given that English Nature is the statutory body in charge of administering the SSSI and NNR system, will the number of such designations in an ESA determine the level of involvement that English Nature has with the implementation of that ESA? Further, it is evident from Figs. 4.4 and 4.5 that despite many commonalities between the two ESAs in terms of the type of environmental designations present, there are some differences - most notably where the Cotswold Hills ESA is part of the wider Cotswold AONB. Of interest to this research is the extent to which such differences may influence and determine the networks of actors whom the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs are in

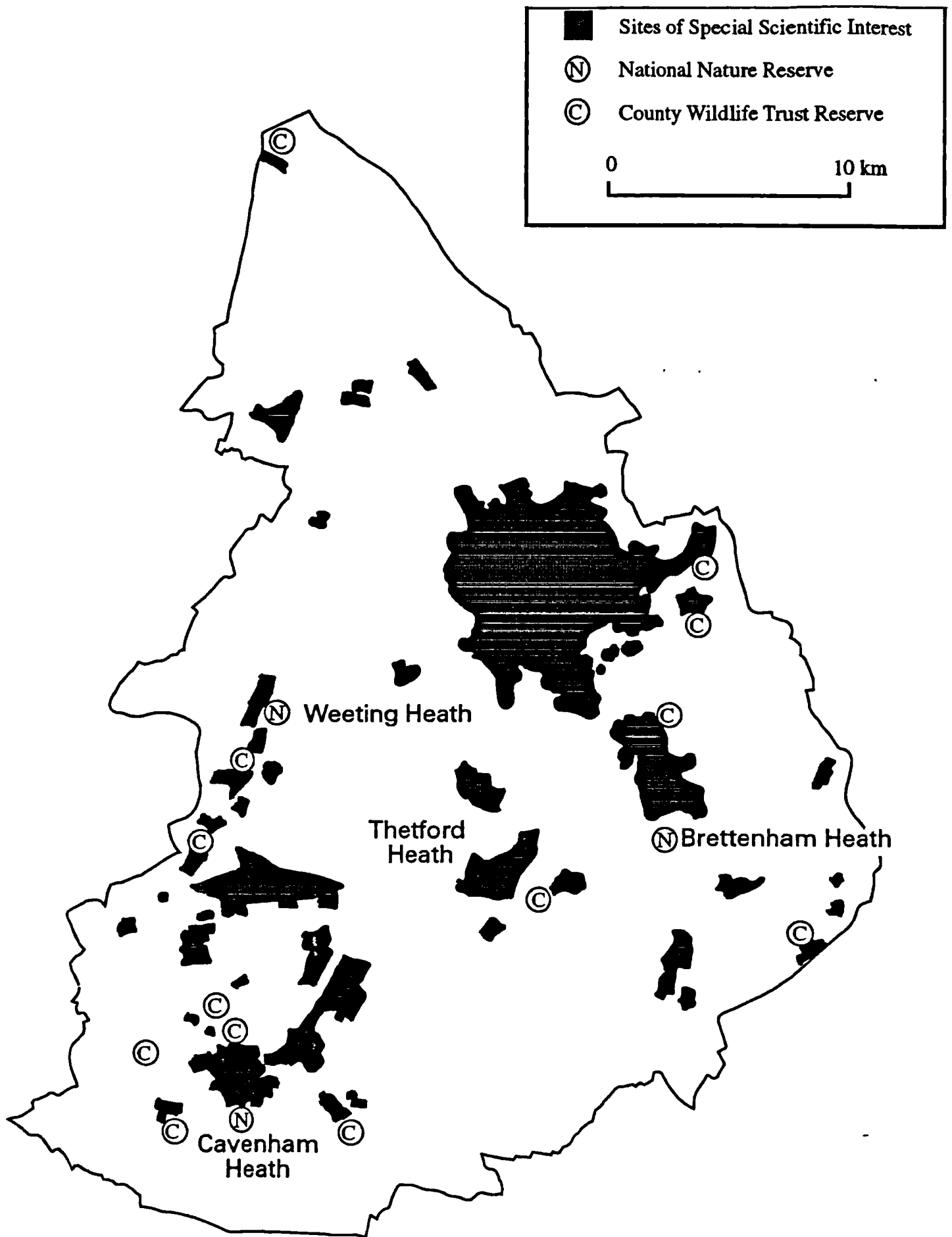


Fig. 4.4. Environmental Designations in the Breckland ESA (Source: Brecks Study Group, 1992)

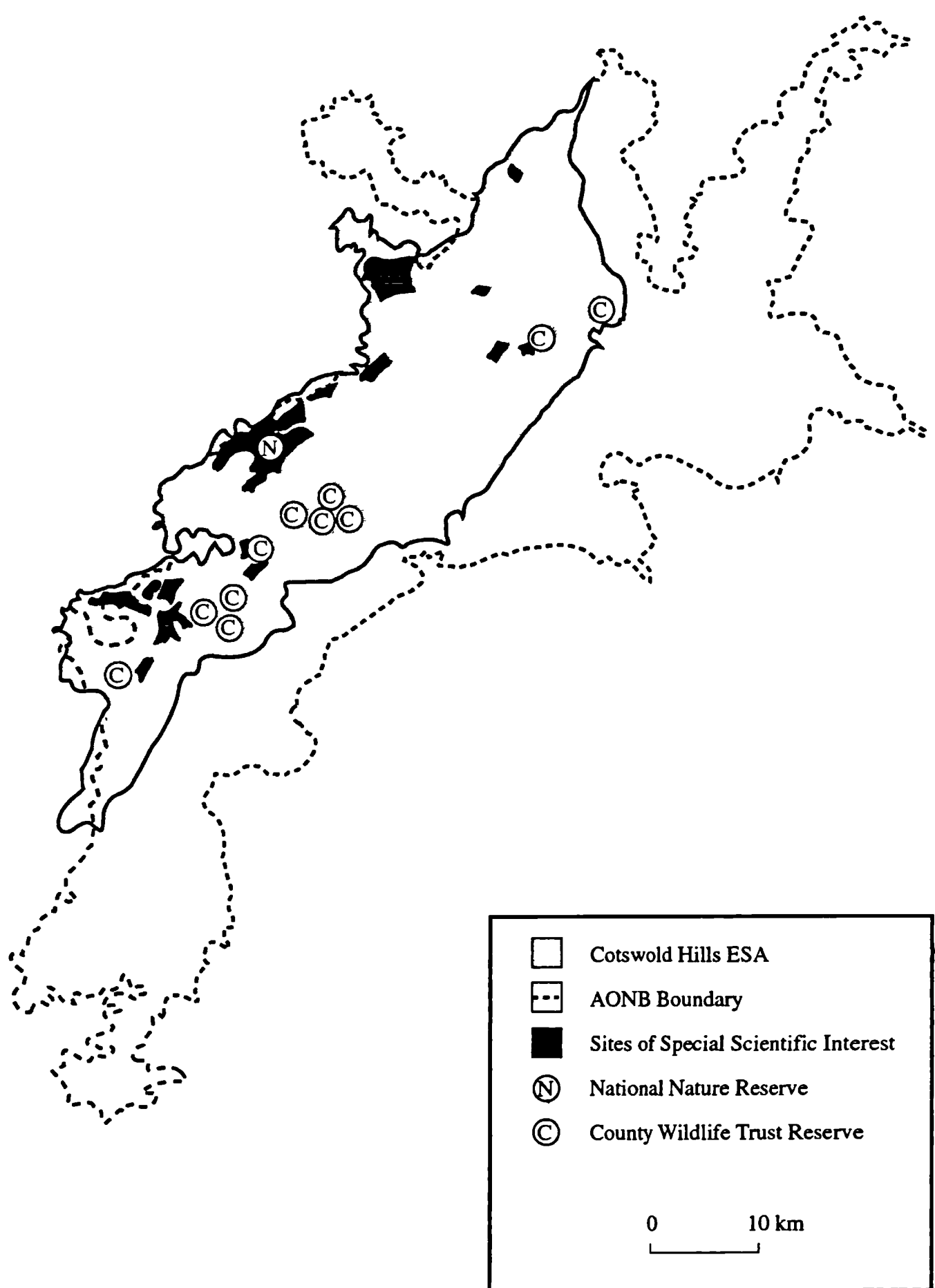


Fig. 4.5. Environmental Designations in the Cotswold Hills ESA (Source: adapted from English Nature, 1998)

contact with. As Chapter 7 will detail, the Cotswold AONB is implemented and managed by an advisory committee comprised of a number of individuals from representative bodies such as the CPRE and County Councils. Given that the Cotswold Hills ESA is part of this designation, will the AONB advisory committee be enrolled in the PO's actor-network? If so, will the implementation strategies of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs reflect their differential actor-networks?

Participation Rates: Finally, in seeking to analyse the role and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer, the Breckland ESA and the Cotswold Hills ESA offers the research a useful comparison of participation rates, from which analysis may seek to discern the extent to which agri-environmental participation may be influenced by the individual FRCA PO. According to MAFF (1996a), in 1996, approximately 70% of farmers eligible to participate in the Cotswold Hills ESA had signed ESA agreements, while only 23% of eligible participants within the Breckland ESA had participated in the scheme. As Chapter 3 outlined, it has been widely acknowledged throughout agri-environmental research studies that a number of farmer and scheme factors have influenced participatory rates within individual schemes (see Brotherton, 1989,1991; Morris and Potter, 1995; Wilson, 1996, 1997). The level of income possessed by an individual farmer, and the size of their farm have, for example, been found to greatly influence their decisions to participate in a scheme, but what influence has the FRCA PO had on farmers' agri-environmental decision-making processes?

4.3.2 Following Actors in the Case Studies

In seeking to analyse whether such differences between the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs have had any influence on the composition of actor-networks constructed by the individual POs, and consequently on how the POs implement the ESA schemes, the research has attempted to adopt Callon's (1986) actor-network methodology and follow the POs as they implement their respective ESAs - observing and analysing the different actors enrolled into the POs' implementation network. In doing so, actor-network theorists assert that a snowball technique common within many qualitative studies (e.g. Burgess, 1984; Kingdon, 1984; Johnson, 1990) should be adopted, where the researcher initially starts their analysis with the main actor under investigation - in this case the FRCA PO. Callon (1986) asserts that this actor should be left to speak for himself/herself, to reveal their own definitions, objectives and associations with other actors. If the actor under investigation reveals that they are in contact with any other actor(s), then, in accordance with the snowball technique, Callon (1986) asserts that the researcher must move on and analyse the lifeworlds of these 'new' actors. Again, these actors should be left to speak for themselves and in turn reveal how they operate within the emerging actor-network. Are they in contact with any other actors who influence and shape their lifeworlds? If they are then the researcher is again expected to move on to those actors

mentioned by the 'second' actor and analyse how they construct their decisions, actions, and associations with other actors. If they reveal that they are in contact with any other actors the snowball methodology should continue accordingly (Fig. 4.6).

Adopting such a snowball methodology, therefore, the POs implementing the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs were the first individuals to be interviewed, as they were the main actors under investigation. In seeking to observe and listen to the POs as they speak and reveal their own beliefs, objectives, feelings and relationships with other actors, the research sought to emulate other agri-environmental researchers who have adopted the actor-network methodology (e.g. Ward, 1994; Murdoch and Marsden, 1995; Munton, 1995) by utilising a non-directive interview technique. Commonly this style of interviewing involves the researcher holding a list of questions relevant to the aims of the research, however, rather than asking the interviewee set questions, the researcher lets the respondent guide the structure of the interview to whatever issue they feel is important to the subject under investigation. The researcher will only refer to their list of questions whenever the interviewee digresses widely from the general aims of the research. Adopting such a methodology, Pile (1990) asserts that each interview will be unique, reflecting the individualism of the respondent, rather than of a pre-given theory or concept.

Although no structured or consistent interview questions were to be adopted within the research, a pilot interview with a recently retired PO (made known to the author by an official within the head office of the FRCA) was conducted, primarily as a means of enabling the researcher to gain some experience in conducting non-directive interviews. Following the pilot interview, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs were contacted by letter in the early months of 1997, to explain the research and to request a convenient time for an interview. Their co-operation was subsequently secured and they were respectively interviewed in April and June, 1997⁷. Both interviews took place in the offices of the individual PO and lasted from approximately one hour with the Breckland ESA PO, to a two hour discussion with the Cotswold Hills ESA PO. Both interviews were tape recorded with prior consent from the POs and subsequently transcribed. Additionally, a detailed account of each interview was made immediately following the interviews. These accounts included information on the location of the interview and any unspoken gestures and expressions that helped to contextualise the respondents' views and perceptions that were expressed throughout the interview.

⁷All of the interviews conducted within the Breckland ESA were conducted in April and May, 1997. Within the Cotswold Hills ESA, all interviews took place in June and July 1997.

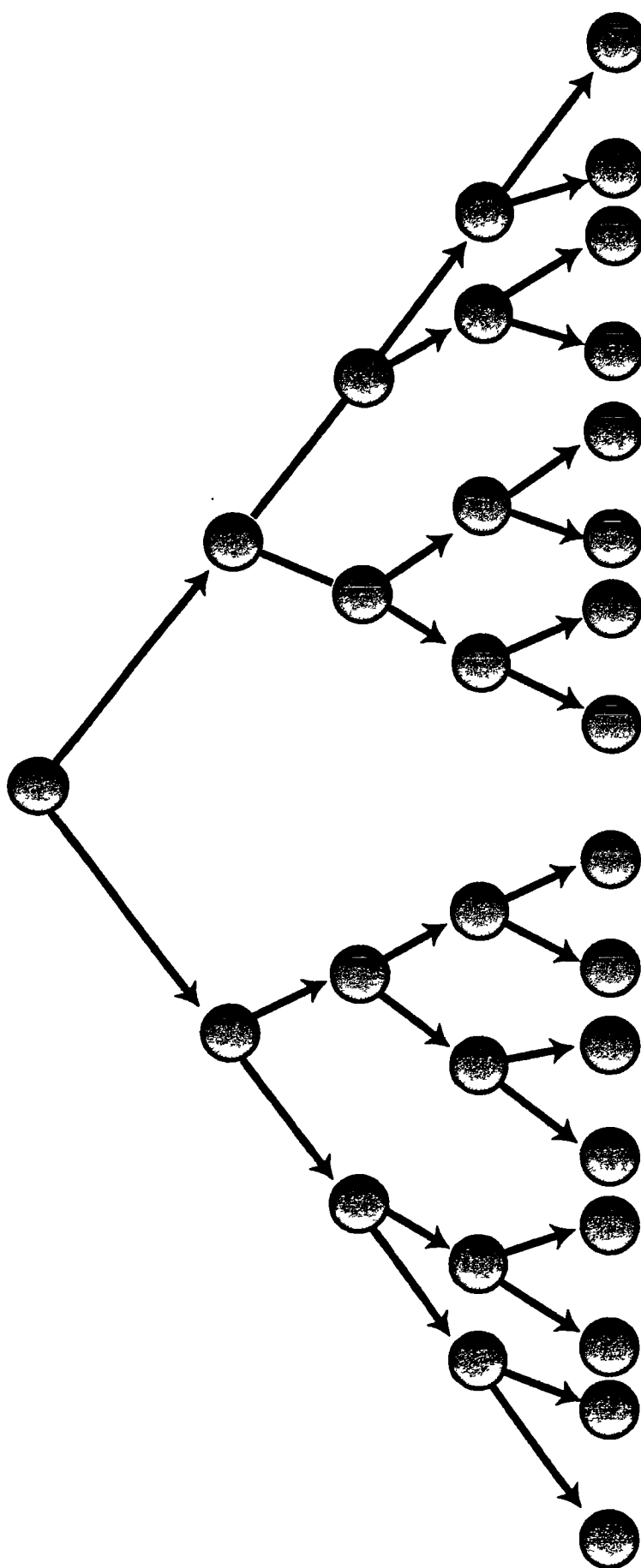


Fig 4.6 Actor - Network Methodology: 'Following the Actors' (source: author)

As the POs spoke of their involvement in the implementation of their respective ESA schemes they revealed a number of actors who they are in contact with throughout their day to day work. As Chapter 5 will detail, both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs revealed how they are in frequent contact with MAFF's Regional Service Centres (RSCs) and their Team Manager within the FRCA. Chapter 7 will also discuss the fact that the POs spoke of their contact with local environmental interest groups, drawing particular attention to their role as agri-environmental agreement holders, and advisers to the PO. In accordance with the snowball technique advocated by actor-network theorists the research went on to conduct non-directive interviews with most of the actors whom the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs revealed as being involved in the implementation of their agri-environmental schemes (Table 4.3).

Breckland ESA	Cotswold Hills ESA
FRCA Project Officer	FRCA Project Officer
FRCA Team Manager	FRCA Assistant Project Officer
MAFF's Regional Service Centre (RSC) Environmental Manager	FRCA Team Manager
English Nature Conservation Officer for Norfolk	MAFF's Regional Service Centre (RSC) Environmental Manager
Norfolk Wildlife Trust Breckland Field Officer	English Nature Conservation Officer for Gloucestershire
Suffolk Wildlife Trust Breckland Field Officer	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust Conservation Officer
Brecks Countryside Project Officer	Gloucestershire County Archaeologist
RSPB Breckland Officer	Gloucestershire FWAG Advisor
Suffolk FWAG Advisor	National Trust Officer for Gloucestershire.
Norfolk FWAG Advisor	AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Suffolk County Archaeologist	
Ministry of Defence Conservation Officer	
Director of Strutt and Parker Farms Ltd.	
Game Conservancy Trust Lowland Director	

Table 4.3. Actors interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs.

Given the fact that the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs spoke of the majority of these actors by name, their identification was made simple, and letters requesting interviews were able to be sent directly to each of the relevant actors. As with the POs, interview dates were secured with all of the individuals contacted, whereupon the interviews took place in the offices of the respondents where they varied in length from 30 minutes to two and a half hours. All of the interviews were tape recorded and supported by reflexive accounts. However, for one group of actors - namely the farmers - mentioned by the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs, the research initially found it more difficult to identify and contact specific individual farmers in order to request and secure interviews.

Identifying A Farmer Sample

Not surprisingly, in their respective interviews, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs spoke of the contact, or in some cases the lack of contact, that they have with ESA participants and non-participants. In these discussions, however, the POs tended to refer to the farmers as a generic group. In light of a confidentiality clause imposed by MAFF, where the PO is obliged to retain the names and addresses of any ESA agreement holder (see Chapter 7), the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs did not reveal the names of any specific farmer or landowner with whom they were in contact. Throughout their interviews they spoke of their contact with ESA participants and non-participants in terms of “visits made to *an agreement holder*” or “phone calls to *non-participants*”. On occasion, both POs used the cases of individual farmers to illustrate their arguments, but they maintained the confidentiality of the farmer and, instead, used references such as, “there is a farmer, whose got land near ...” or “there was one farmer who ...”. Given MAFF’s confidentiality clause the snowball methodology adopted within the research was presented with a distinct obstacle. Without knowing which specific farmers the POs are in contact with, how could the research go on to interview farmers and analyse their involvement in the agri-environmental implementation process? Faced with this problem the research, for the first time, deviated from the methodology advocated by actor-network theorists.

Acknowledging that there was a need to analyse the role of the ESA participants and non-participants in the agri-environmental implementation process, the research drew upon the methodologies of previous agri-environmental studies and sought to establish an analytical sample of farmers within both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. In each of the ESAs, the initial intention was to interview ten participants and ten non-participants. It is recognised that such a sample is not large enough to support detailed statistical analyses of farmers’ objectives and decisions within the two ESAs. However, the aim of this research is not to construct a generalised representation of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills farming communities. Instead, like Pile’s (1990) study of Somerset dairy farmers, this research focuses upon case histories and in-depth qualitative accounts of individuals’ objectives and experiences. Thus, a smaller farmer sample was favoured in order to facilitate in-depth analysis of each individual case history (see also Burgess, 1984; Johnson, 1990; Foddy, 1993; Hamel et al., 1993). As McCracken (1988:17) argues:

“less is more ... for many [qualitative] research projects, eight respondents will be perfectly sufficient. The quantitatively trained social scientist reels at the thought of so small a sample’, but it is important to remember that this group is not chosen to represent some part of the larger world. It offers, instead, an opportunity to glimpse the complicated character, organisations and logic of culture”.

In seeking to construct a sample of farmers to be analysed many agri-environmental researchers have turned to the local Yellow Pages business directories as one of the most accessible and adequate sampling frames for contemporary research studies (Potter and Gasson, 1988; Scambler, 1989; Bishop, 1990; Morris and Potter, 1995; Holloway and Ilbery, 1996). In a recent paper, Burton and Wilson (in press) have expressed some caution, however, over the use of the Yellow Pages as an appropriate sampling frame for agri-environmental research. They argue that the Yellow Pages may exclude less-commercial or 'life style' farmers, who, although still deriving much of their income from farming, are generally more conservation-oriented in their environmental management approach and farm on a lower profit margin. Essentially, by utilising the Yellow Pages, therefore, Burton and Wilson (in press) argue that such agri-environmentally significant individuals may be excluded from research studies. Earlier, Errington (1985) had recognised that there were a number of limitations and potential sources of bias when using the Yellow Pages. "It is inadequate because particular types of farm and farmer tend to be excluded thus giving a biased sample of the entire population" (Errington, 1985:252). Despite this one primary criticism, however, Errington (1985) went on to conclude that the Yellow Pages provides a relatively accessible, effective and accurate sampling frame. Indeed, in their sharp critique of this sampling frame, Burton and Wilson (in press) were forced to conclude that faced with little alternatives the Yellow Pages, in conjunction with recognition of its limitations, continues to present itself as the most appropriate farmer sampling frame. Thus, in the absence of any names and addresses of farmers who the POs were in contact with, the research drew upon a combination of local Yellow Pages business directories and Ordnance Survey (OS) 1:25,000 maps in order to establish the farmer samples within both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs.

Initially, all farm holdings situated within both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA boundaries were identified on the 1:25,000 OS maps of the study areas. The farm holdings were then compared to those listed in the local Yellow Pages in order to obtain the names and addresses of farmers occupying these holdings. Given the small sample size requirement of qualitative research (McCracken, 1988; Johnson, 1990; Foddy, 1993), not all of those farm holdings identified in the Yellow Pages were contacted. Rather, given the target of the sample size, twenty farmers were contacted within each area. Often, researchers conducting qualitative studies, select their informants on the basis of personal acquaintance (Gasson, 1981; Pile, 1990), or through previously conducted surveys (Ward, 1994). However, faced with limited knowledge and connections with the Breckland and Cotswold Hills farming communities, the twenty farmers within each area had to be selected randomly, using a computer based random number generator (Oppenheim, 1992).

Once the names and addresses of twenty farmers in each ESA had been selected a letter was sent explaining the aims of the research and asking for the farmers co-operation with the

ensuing interviews. Additionally, the farmers were asked to complete and return (by means of a stamped addressed envelope) four initial questions (see appendix 3), in order to confirm their name and full address as often the Yellow Pages does not provide such detailed information, and, further, to reveal whether they are ESA participants or non-participants.

Within the Breckland ESA, seventy percent of the twenty farmers returned these initial questions, compared to an eighty percent response rate in the Cotswold Hills ESAs. However, when the initially unresponsive farmers were contacted by telephone they all agreed to participate in the research. Thus, as intended a farmer sample of twenty farmers in both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs was established. In terms of the distribution of participants and non-participants the farmer sample within the Breckland ESA was evenly distributed, whereas in the Cotswold Hills ESA only a third of the farmer sample were non-participants (Table. 4.4). Given that the current overall percentage of participants within the Cotswold Hills ESA is believed to be approximately 70 percent (Appleton, 1997), it was felt that the low number of non-participants in the farmer sample population was simply reflective of the whole ESA, and would not impede the qualitative nature of the research.

	Breckland ESA	Cotswold Hills ESA
Participants	10	16
Non-Participants	10	4
TOTAL	20	20

Table. 4.4. Farmer sample population in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA.

Once the farmers' co-operation was gained, either through receipt of the completed questions or through telephone conversations, each farmer within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs was contacted in order to arrange a convenient time for interview. Returning to the actor-network methodology, non-directive interviews were conducted with the farmers where they were left to speak for themselves, to reveal their own agri-environmental definitions, objectives and inter-actor relations. Each interview lasted from 30 minutes to an hour and a half, depending upon the willingness of the respondent to converse at length. Further, continuing the same approach adopted in earlier interviews, all of the interviews conducted with the farmers were tape recorded with the prior consent of the respondent, and a detailed reflexive account of the interview was constructed, noting in particular where the interview took place, and any unspoken gestures that may help to contextualise the farmers' views and opinions expressed during the interview.

Following the farmer interviews the research sought to resume the snowball methodology of the actor-network approach. Throughout their interviews the actors initially revealed by the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs spoke of a number of associations that they have established with other actors during their involvement with the implementation of the ESA schemes (Fig. 4.7). As Chapter 6 will detail, a number of participants in the Breckland ESA revealed how they are in contact with the Game Conservancy Trust for advice and information pertaining to the management of conservation headlands for game rearing. Further, many participants and non-participants in the two ESAs revealed how they are in close contact with their landlords, who they assert have considerable influence on their decisions to implement the ESA schemes. Concomitantly, a number of the field officers from local environmental interest groups evidently in contact with the ESA POs went on to reveal in their interviews that they possess close working relations with their parent organisations and other local environmentalists (see Chapter 7). Again, following the snowball technique these actors were in turn interviewed, but at what point was the research to stop following the agri-environmental actors? According to actor-network theorists, the researcher will complete the snowball methodology when it becomes apparent that no new actors are enrolled in the individual actor-networks under investigation. As Chapter 9 will discuss in detail, however, knowing when and where the networks end is a much more difficult process than advocated by the actor-network theorists. In reality, the researcher often has to make a personal judgement when to cease following the actor-networks. Naturally, this will introduce elements of bias and personal interpretation, further highlighting the important need for researchers to be reflexive throughout their field work. In the field, it was apparent that for many actors their ESA implementation networks ‘died a natural death’. For many of the local environmental interest groups, for example, their implementation networks evidently ceased at their parent organisation, where during interviews with the officials from these organisations they revealed that in relation to the ESA schemes they had not established any ‘new’ links with other actors (see Fig. 4.7). However, where the networks of actors, such as that of MAFF’s and many farmers’, appeared to extend into the European arena, a personal judgement had to be made to stop the snowball methodology at a level of analysis that would be attainable given the financial and temporal limitations of the research. The cut-off point for the methodology was chosen to be the national level of analysis, where interviews were conducted with officials within MAFF and the FRCA head offices. Where individual actor-networks appeared to extend further, the research sought to draw upon existing research studies which focused on the European context of agri-environmental policy (e.g. Hart and Wilson, in press).

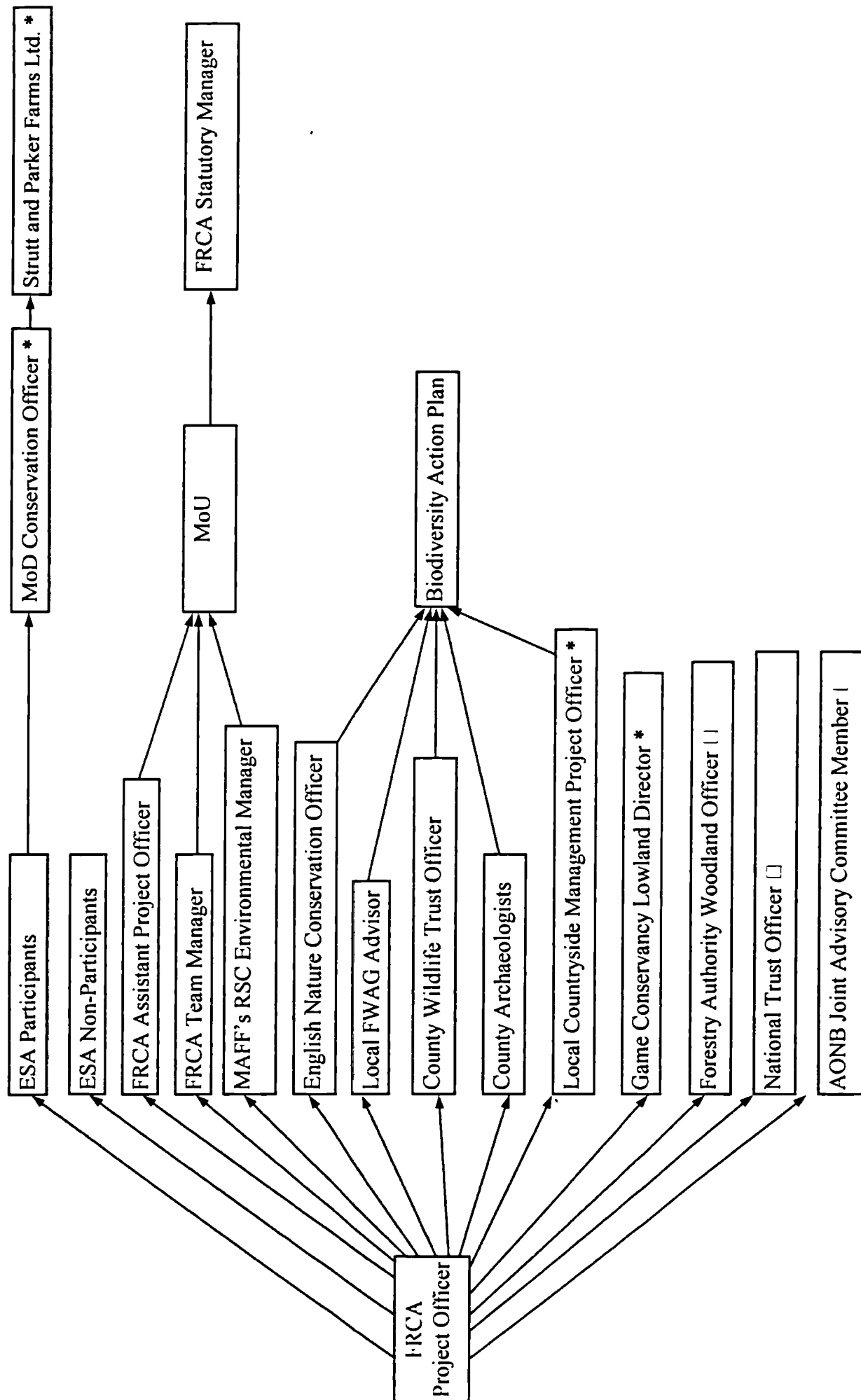


Fig. 4.7. Following Actors in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs
 * Specific to the Breckland ESA □ Specific to the Cotswold Hills ESA
 (Source: Author)

4.4 Quantitative Methodology - Postal Questionnaire

Given the qualitative nature of the research conducted in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, it was recognised that despite one of the primary aims of the thesis - to further an understanding of the role and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer - little was known about the FRCA POs/APOs as a body of officials employed by MAFF to implement agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales. What gender and age, for example, do POs/APOs tend to be? What is the educational background of the average PO? What form of training, if any, have they received? Have they any previous experience with implementing agricultural or environmental policies? By asking such questions it was felt that a detailed profile of the UK's agri-environmental implementers may be compiled and used to contextualise the qualitative analysis which specifically elicited information on the relationships that the POs have with other agri-environmental actors.

In order to acquire this background information on the characteristics of the UK's agri-environmental implementers a quantitative postal questionnaire was sent to all FRCA POs and APOs currently implementing agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales (see appendix 4). The APOs were included in this extensive survey as preliminary analysis of policy documentation revealed that very little difference exists between the implementation roles of the POs and APOs. They are both local-level implementers employed within the FRCA, who work together at the ground level to implement the agri-environmental schemes. The one hundred percent PO/APO sample was made known to the author by the FRCA Contract Manager. As Chapter 5 will detail, the FRCA Contract Manager is an official within the FRCA whose primary duty is to administer and oversee the employment of the FRCA POs/APOs. Early on in the research process, a preliminary interview was conducted with the Contract Manager where the objectives of the research were discussed. Initially the FRCA Contract Manager expressed his concerns that such an independent survey may prove damaging to the future of the FRCA POs/APOs. He insisted that the research proposal must be discussed with MAFF, before any further work could commence. Although the research was momentarily halted by these discussions, the concerns of the FRCA and MAFF were extremely indicative of the level of importance that agricultural policy makers attach to the POs/APOs. As Chapter 3 discussed, MAFF has invested a large proportion of their agri-environmental budget into the employment of the FRCA POs/APOs, and it appeared from the FRCA Contract Manager that it is an investment which MAFF are keen to defend (see Chapter 5). However, despite their initial hesitation as to the feasibility of the research being undertaken, MAFF and the FRCA did eventually agree to co-operate with the postal questionnaire by providing the names and addresses of all the FRCA POs/APOs implementing MAFF's agri-environmental schemes.

It is recognised that many methodological problems are associated with structured questionnaires and, in addition, with postal questionnaires. As Oppenheim (1992) and Foddy (1993) outline, structured questionnaires are limiting in their ability to reveal detailed information concerning actors' personal beliefs, attitudes and feelings. Further, it has been empirically supported that the length and format of a questionnaire, the ordering of individual questions and the style of questions can greatly influence the responses given by the interviewee. When a structured questionnaire takes the form of a postal questionnaire, additional problems are encountered. The possibility of a low response rate is frequently cited, as is the lack of control that the researcher has over the order in which the questions are answered, and, in turn, the limited opportunity that the researcher has to observe the behaviour of the respondent and, thus, to obtain additional information that may be crucial to the research objectives (Dixon and Leach, 1977; Burgess, 1984; Foddy, 1993). Despite these many problems, however, the structured postal questionnaire has been adopted by many researchers seeking to analyse a large spatially heterogeneous sample. According to Oppenheim (1992), the postal questionnaire is simply the easiest, most cost-effective methodological tool with which to reach a large population. In this context, it was recognised that in seeking to analyse all of the FRCA POs/APOs, the advantages of the structured postal questionnaire outstripped their apparent limitations and provided the most suitable quantitative technique with which to survey the personal backgrounds and characteristics of the POs/APOs.

Prior to distributing the PO/APO questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted, in order to test the questionnaire's format, its length and clarity of questions. Although pilot surveys are standard procedure throughout all quantitative methodologies, it is essential when adopting a postal questionnaire that the clarity of questions is exact, the format is comprehensible, and the length of the questionnaire is appropriate to encourage a good response rate. As the questionnaire sought to cover 100 per cent of the POs/APOs, however, it was recognised that, in seeking to conduct a pilot study, the research was effectively left with no contemporary POs/APOs who could analyse and test the applicability of the questionnaire. As a result, the author turned again to the FRCA Contract Manager who, as the primary official in charge of all POs APOs past and present, was believed to be the most appropriate individual to contact in search of a suitable pilot sample. With little hesitation this time the FRCA Contract Manager provided the names and addresses of four recently retired POs who would be possible candidates on which to test the structured questionnaire. These retired POs were contacted and all completed the questionnaire and commented where they felt improvements could be made to the structure and clarity of the questions.

Drawing upon the comments of the pilot sample it was evident that the questionnaire was too long. Many of the POs argued that the length of the questionnaire would elicit a very poor response rate amongst their former colleagues. In addition, some questions were thought to be

too ambiguous and easily misinterpreted. As a result, the terminology used in a number of the questions was reappraised in order to clarify the objectives of the questions. Further, a number of open ended questions were shortened by providing pre-given answers in a tick-box-form, as the pilot sample drew attention to the fact that an open ended postal questionnaire would be beset with a number of methodological problems, such as a low response rate from the contemporary POs/APOs. Following the pilot survey, therefore, necessary amendments were made to the format and length of the questionnaire. A finalised version of the questionnaire (see appendix 4) was then sent to each of the 101 FRCA POs/APOs, in conjunction with a covering letter explaining the objectives of the survey.

The final questionnaire was divided into three main sections, each of which sought to obtain information on the role of the PO/APO, their relationships with other actors involved in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes, whether any differences exist in terms of how they implement the different schemes, and finally, the personal characteristics of the POs/APOs, including, for example, their gender, age and educational background (see appendix 4). In seeking to fulfil the aims of this research by analysing the role and influence of the FRCA PO, in relation to other agri-environmental actors, the first section of the questionnaire sought to establish the relationship of the PO/APO with their bureaucratic superiors - MAFF and the FRCA. Of particular interest was the extent to which the PO/APO reflects Lipsky's (1980) street-level bureaucrat by possessing a high level of autonomy from their superiors (see section 2.4). In this context, questions were asked concerning the level of contact that the POs/APOs have with their superiors, why this contact takes place and if they are permitted any flexibility when implementing their respective agri-environmental schemes. The second section of the questionnaire followed a similar format in order to discern what contact the PO APO has with interest groups such as English Nature, the County Wildlife Trusts and FWAG. As Chapter 3 outlined, there has been an increasing number of interest groups operating in the locality, providing agri-environmental advice and information to individual farmers. In some cases, it is evident that farmers have chosen to receive and implement the advice of these interest groups, rather than the advice provided by state agricultural advisors (see Winter et al., 1996). However, to date little is known of the level of involvement and influence that these interest groups have within the implementation of UK agri-environmental schemes. As a result, the questionnaire sought to obtain information from the FRCA POs/APOs concerning the level of contact that they have with local interest groups, in particular, which groups they are in contact with, and why such contact takes place. Towards the end of the questionnaire, further information was sought on the relative influence of the FRCA PO APO in relation to other agri-environmental actors, namely farmers participating and not-participating in the respective schemes. Questions were asked concerning the level of contact that the individual PO APO has with agri-environmental participants and non-participants. In addition, the questionnaire sought to obtain information on whether the

PO APO had any previous contact with their local farming community and whether they felt that this had any influence on their relationship with the farmers as agri-environmental participants or non-participants. Finally, the last section of the postal questionnaire sought to construct a detailed profile of the individual PO APO. In this context, questions were asked requiring information on the gender, age, educational background, employment history and agri-environmental interests of the respondent.

The FRCA POs APOs were given a month in which to return the completed questionnaires. If after this period any PO/APO had failed to return the questionnaire, they were sent a reminder letter and another copy of the questionnaire in case the former had been mislaid. Compared to a number of quantitative research studies employing a postal questionnaire technique the response rate was relatively high. Eighty percent of the POs/APOs returned the questionnaire in full. The expected response for postal questionnaires is usually placed around 41 per cent (Dixon and Leach, 1977). The high response rate within this research must partly be attributed to the co-operation of the FRCA Contract Manager which was gained in the initial stages of establishing the survey sample. In addition to providing names of retired and contemporary POs/APOs, the Contract Manager agreed to write a covering letter to accompany the questionnaires, explaining to the POs/APOs why this research was being undertaken and that it had approval from the FRCA and MAFF. Initially the Contract Manager wished to distribute the questionnaires to POs/APOs' immediate superiors - the regional FRCA Team Managers who oversee the work of the individual PO/APO. However, recognising that this may give the FRCA superiors control over the questionnaire and, thus, possibly influence the way in which the POs/APOs would respond to the questions, careful negotiation succeeded in ensuring that the questionnaires would be administered by the author. The fact that this negotiation took place, in addition to MAFF's and the FRCA's earlier scepticism of the research, provided some initial evidence of the control which bureaucratic superiors seek to place over the FRCA PO/APO (for detailed analytical discussion of this issue, see chapter 5).

On receipt of the completed questionnaires, the pre-coded data was analysed using the computer based statistical programme Minitab. Given that the objectives of the questionnaire was to develop a detailed profile of the characteristics and relationships of the individual FRCA PO APO, this programme enabled basic descriptive statistical tools to be applied to the data, in order to reveal, for example, the average age of the FRCA POs/APOs, for what reason most of the POs/APOs are in contact with either MAFF, the FRCA or a specific interest group, and how many POs/APOs have received training in conservation management skills.

Drawing upon such quantitative empirical data, in conjunction with the qualitative analysis, Part IV of the thesis seeks to construct a detailed profile of the FRCA POs/APOs and to analyse their role and influence within their agri-environmental actor-networks. In particular,

the FRCA POs/APOs' relationship with their bureaucratic superiors in MAFF and the FRCA will be examined, followed by an analysis of their relationship with farmers and local interest groups. Part V will subsequently draw on this analysis and examine, in relation to empirical evidence, whether Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy is applicable in an analysis of the agri-environmental implementer, or whether the actor-network approach is a more suitable conceptual and methodological approach to adopt when analysing the role and influence of the local-level implementer.

PART IV

THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF THE FRCA PROJECT OFFICER: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout Part II, the thesis outlined the need to further our understanding of the role and influence of the local-level implementer. It was explained that while policy analysts and academics recognise the influential role played by implementers in the policy process, few contemporary researchers have attempted to move beyond the textbook debate on policy implementation and empirically analyse the role and influence that local-level implementers have on the implementation and outcome of contemporary policies. Part II went on to assert that such empirical research is evidently required in relation to the UK's agri-environmental policy. Chapter 3 outlined how agricultural policy makers have invested a large proportion of their agri-environmental budget in employing agri-environmental implementers - or project officers as they are officially termed - who they believe to be key actors determining the outcome and 'success' of individual agri-environmental schemes. As little is known of the validity of such assertions the thesis proposed that a detailed analysis of the role and influence of the FRCA PO would further an understanding of the implementation and effectiveness of the UK's contemporary agri-environmental policy. Following an actor-network methodology, the research sought to analyse the role and influence of the FRCA PO within two specific case studies - the Breckland ESA and the Cotswold Hills ESA.

In this section of the thesis policy documentation and empirical evidence derived from the project officer postal questionnaire, and interviews conducted within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs will be used to analyse the relative influence of the FRCA PO in comparison to other policy actors involved in the implementation of UK agri-environmental schemes. Situating the analysis within an actor-network context, the following analytical chapters will outline and analyse those actors who, according to the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs, are involved in their agri-environmental implementation network. Chapter 5 will analyse the relative influence of the POs' personal characteristics, such as their age, educational background and employment history. Further, the chapter will examine the relationship of the POs with their bureaucratic superiors in MAFF and the FRCA. Following this, Chapter 6 will focus on the relationship between the POs and farmers, analysing how the POs seek to enrol farmers into the agri-environmental schemes, in particular, what strategies the POs use to persuade and convince the farmers to participate in the schemes. Chapter 7 then

turns to analyse the FRCA PO in relation to local agri-environmental actors and again analyses how the PO interacts with these local actors, whether the PO enrolls them into MAFF's agri-environmental implementation network, or whether the PO has little influence over the decisions and actions of other policy actors. In conclusion, Chapter 7 will seek to draw together the empirical findings from the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs and discuss how influential the FRCA PO is in the individual ESA implementation processes.

Chapter 5

Constructing the FRCA Project Officer's Life World

5.1 Introduction

In seeking to analyse the relative influence of the FRCA PO/APO in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales, this chapter draws upon the postal questionnaire and interviews conducted in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, in order to demonstrate how the role of the PO as an agri-environmental implementer is largely shaped and influenced by their personal characteristics and, in particular, by their bureaucratic superiors in MAFF and the FRCA. In doing so, the analysis firstly constructs a detailed analytical profile of those FRCA POs/APOs currently implementing agri-environmental schemes within England and Wales. Particular attention is paid to the age, gender, educational background and employment history of the POs/APOs in order to understand the personal experiences and knowledge that the officers may bring to the agri-environmental implementation network. Following this, the chapter continues to draw upon the postal questionnaire and analyses interviews conducted with ministerial actors and the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs in order to analyse the relationship of the POs with their bureaucratic superiors.

5.2 Profile of FRCA Project Officers and Assistant Project Officers

There are currently 76 POs and 25 APOs implementing the various agri-environmental schemes within England and Wales. While these figures are correct at the time of writing the number of POs and APOs employed by MAFF fluctuates as new schemes are introduced and where increasing levels of participation in individual schemes require additional project officer support. Indeed, throughout the period in which the FRCA and its predecessor ADAS have been implementing agri-environmental schemes there has been an overall increase in the number of POs/APOs, with distinct periods of recruitment that reflect the different stages in which the UK's agri-environmental schemes have been formulated and introduced. In particular, significant periods of recruitment have coincided with the introduction of agri-environmental schemes following EU Regulations 797 85/EEC and 2078 92/EEC, and when POs/APOs implementing the CS scheme moved from the Countryside Commission to MAFF in April 1996 (Fig. 5.1).

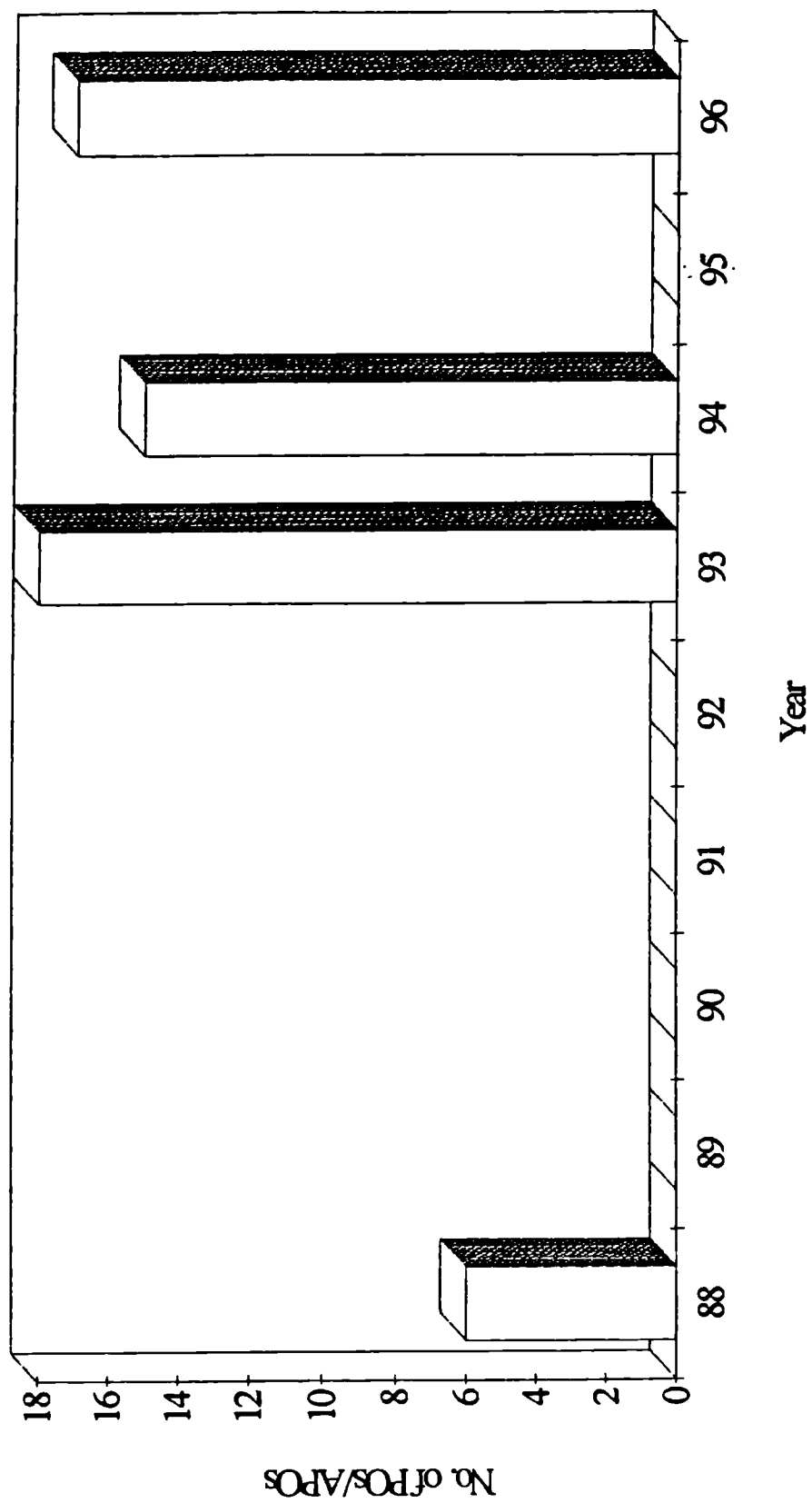


Fig. 5.1 Periods of FRCA PO/APO Recruitment (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

In terms of their spatial distribution the FRCA POs/APOs are located throughout the country, reflecting the widespread designation and target areas of the various agri-environmental schemes. Generally, each project officer is assigned a specific agri-environmental scheme. In the case of the CS scheme POs/APOs are given a specific county in which to implement the scheme's requirements. However, where schemes cover a large area, or participation levels are exceptionally high, a team of POs and/or APOs will often work together to implement the respective schemes. The Cotswold Hills ESA, for example, is implemented by a team of five APOs with one lead PO overseeing and co-ordinating their activities. The Breckland ESA, on the other hand, as a decidedly smaller scheme with fewer participants, is implemented by only one FRCA PO. Additionally, many project officers are assigned more than one agri-environmental scheme, but again this will depend upon the size of the various schemes and the current workload of the individual project officer. For example, one PO completing the questionnaire outlined that he was in charge of implementing a total of six schemes⁸ However, he did go on to reveal that in relation to a number of these schemes participation levels were either minimal, or he operated as a member of a team which enabled him to divide his time amongst all of the individual schemes under his charge. With some agri-environmental schemes, thus, being implemented by either one PO or by up to five POs/APOs, the spatial distribution of the FRCA POs/APOs throughout England is evidently uneven².

Age and Gender

Analysing the postal questionnaire further, it is evident that the majority (73%) of the POs/APOs implementing the agri-environmental schemes are male, with an average age of 41-50 years old. According to Blackford et al. (1997), within the UK there are generally more males than females occupying agricultural advisory positions. Kolizeras (1988) highlighted that in the late 1980s only 25 per cent of ADAS' agricultural advisors were female. Today, in the FRCA this figure has not increased dramatically. Only 27 per cent of those POs/APOs surveyed were female, reflecting what Blackford et al. (1997) believes to be the current gender balance on agricultural courses and a traditionally male dominated agricultural industry, where farmers have tended to be male and often prefer to seek and receive advice from male advisers. Any increase in the number of female POs/APOs has tended to occur in recent years. For example, only 4 per cent of the POs working for ADAS in 1988 were female, while today the figure has increased to 18 per cent.

⁸These included, the Pennine Dales ESA, Moorland Scheme, Habitat Scheme-Water Fringe, Habitat Scheme-Former Set-Aside, Habitat Scheme-Saltmarsh and Countryside Access Scheme

²The influence with which this has had on the implementation of the individual agri-environmental schemes will be discussed at a later point within the analysis when the implementation strategies adopted by the various POs/APOs are discussed (see section 5.6)

Within the FRCA a hierarchical promotional strategy is adopted whereby, with increased experience, there are opportunities for APOs to rise to PO status. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is evident from the postal questionnaire that the majority (67%) of APOs are younger individuals aged between 21-30 years old, while the majority (87%) of individuals occupying the higher status PO positions tend to be aged between 41-50 years old, and with a relatively long employment history of working in the state advisory service. Naturally, the POs/APOs implementing the CS scheme have only been employed within the FRCA, and its predecessor ADAS, for a short period of time, but of the remaining POs/APOs the average length of time that they have been employed within ADAS/FRCA has been 14.72 years, with the longest record of employment extending to 34 years for one project officer (Table 5.1). As a further support to Blackford et al.'s (1997) argument, Table 5.1 also reveals that in terms of gender relations, the longer periods of employment within ADAS/FRCA were experienced by male POs, with younger female APOs being recently recruited into the agency.

Length of Employment in ADAS/FRCA - yrs.	No. FRCA Project Officers		No. FRCA Assistant Project Officers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-5	6	6	3	2
6-10	6	2	0	0
11-15	3	0	1	1
16-20	3	2	2	1
21-25	8	0	0	0
26-30	13	0	0	0
31-35	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	40	10	6	4

Table 5.1 Length of employment in ADAS/FRCA in relation to gender and PO/APO status (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

Employment History

Having been employed within the state agricultural advisory service for a number of years, a large proportion of the FRCA POs/APOs have developed a strong background in agricultural related issues. Within the questionnaire information was obtained concerning the exact detail of the POs/APOs' previous work within ADAS/FRCA (see appendix 4). As Table 5.2 outlines, the nature of their work varied throughout the different specialist departments of ADAS before the advisory service was privatised in April 1997 (see section 3.2).

Previous Employment in ADAS	No. FRCA POs/APOs
Not Employed	15
General Agricultural Consultant	38
General On-Farm Conservation Advisor	1
Wildlife Storage Biology Expert	3
Rural Enterprise Consultant	2
Former ESA APO	1
TOTAL	60

Table 5.2 FRCA PO/APO employment history in ADAS (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

Whether the POs/APOs were livestock specialists, surveyors, agronomists or commercial dairy advisors they have all developed a knowledge of agricultural issues and gained experience of working with farming communities. Indeed, the postal questionnaire has revealed that, in some cases, the FRCA POs/APOs are currently in contact with the same farming community which they had previously advised when employed within their respective ADAS departments. For example, the Breckland ESA project officer was previously employed within ADAS' Farm and Countryside Service, and although he was based in Norwich, Norfolk, his work encompassed the Breckland area and brought him into contact with a number of those farmers who he is currently in contact with vis-à-vis the Breckland ESA scheme. As he outlined in a recent interview:

"Well, I've been employed in ADAS most of my working life so its quite a long time ... I was based in Norwich for a few years and I did some work in the Breckland area, but quite a lot outside of it, but er yea, I've known some of the Breckland farmers for quite a long time".

One project officer implementing the South Wessex ESA scheme outlined how he considers it to be rather ironic that many of the FRCA POs/APOs are now having to go back to the same farmers whom they were once encouraging to expand and intensify, and, in accordance, with the current post-productivist ethos of agricultural policy, encourage and advise the same farmers to adopt environmentally friendly farming practices.

"It does seem ridiculous sometimes when you are having to go and try and encourage people to plant a few hedgerows here or there, or to restore a pond when previously you were telling them to rip the hedges up and drain the ponds on their farm" (Belding, 1996).

However, while this reflects the overall contradiction of the post-war agricultural political approach (see Cox et al., 1985a; Blunden and Curry, 1988; Whitby, 1996; Winter, 1996), many of the FRCA POs/APOs outlined within the questionnaire that their previous contact with the same farming communities has helped them to develop a good rapport with those farmers eligible to participate in their respective agri-environmental schemes. As the Breckland ESA project officer explained when asked if his previous contact with the Breckland farming community has helped him to implement the ESA scheme:

“Yea, I think it does help if you’ve worked in the same area. I think anybody going into an area cold, it takes quite a long time to just build up contacts and liaison, so if you already know people it does help”.

Education and Training

Having been employed within the productivist services of ADAS many of the FRCA POs/APOs currently implementing agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales have a formal educational background in agricultural related issues. Indeed, part of ADAS’ recruitment policy for agricultural advisors required individuals with a minimum tertiary qualification, such as a degree or diploma in agricultural and horticultural science, crop and plant science, social science, agricultural engineering or agriculture (ADAS, 1992). Of those FRCA POs/APOs surveyed, 95 per cent possessed degrees or diplomas from a national agricultural college. Due to the nature of these qualifications and the length of employment that many POs/APOs have experienced within ADAS, it was not surprising to find from the questionnaire that 80 per cent of the officers have received some form of training in farm business management issues. Of this percentage, 42 per cent had received their training solely from university education, 21 per cent had gained training simply through internal ADAS training sessions, while 29 per cent stated that they had obtained a knowledge of farm business management through both their university diplomas/degrees and from ‘in house’ training within ADAS (Table 5.3).

Source of FBM Training	No. FRCA POs/APOs
No Training	18
University	20
In House	9
Combination of University and In House	13
TOTAL	60

Table 5.3 Total number of FRCA POs/APOs with Farm Business Management Training (FBMT) (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

Interestingly, further analysis of this data has revealed that great disparities exist between the level of farm business management training that POs/APOs implementing the CS scheme have received in comparison to their colleagues implementing, for example, the ESA schemes.

Agri-Environmental Scheme	No. FRCA POs/APOs With FBM Training
ESA	39
CSS	6

Table 5.4 Number of Environmentally Sensitive Area and Countryside Stewardship Scheme POs/APOs with Farm Business Management Training (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

As Table 5.4 illustrates, of those POs/APOs implementing the ESAs within England, 86.5 per cent have received some form of training in farm business management, while only 54.5 per cent of the CS POs/APOs have received such training. This may be attributed to the fact that the CS POs/APOs were, until April 1996, employed within the CoCo, who, as chapter three outlined, are not by nature associated with farm management decisions in the same way that ADAS/FRCA are. Rather, the CoCo is primarily a conservation oriented organisation which may further explain why many of the CS POs/APOs possess a more formal educational background in conservation related issues compared to their colleagues implementing the ESA schemes.

The issue of conservation training amongst the FRCA POs/APOs has become a major issue of debate amongst a number of conservation groups such as the RSPB, English Nature and Safe Alliance. Concerns have been expressed that, while many of the POs/APOs may be experts in farm business management, they lack the basic knowledge and training in conservation which the environmental groups believe to be essential if the POs/APOs are to assist farmers in implementing schemes that seek to marry farm production methods with environmental conservation. As the head of Safe Alliance outlined:

“ ... the project officers and the people doing the analysis are not well trained enough, for instance they don't define overgrazing how we define overgrazing and that's always a big problem” (Safe Alliance, 1997).

This was further supported by the RSPB (1996) in their recent report to the Agriculture Select Committee's enquiry on 'ESAs and other UK agri-environmental schemes'. They stated that:

“ ... some concerns have been expressed that project officers and agricultural department staff are strong in terms of agricultural expertise, but often lack environmental expertise. It is important therefore that staff are given adequate training and that scheme administrators seek environmental advice from appropriate sources” (RSPB, 1996:29).

Of those FRCA POs/APOs who returned the postal questionnaire 97 per cent stated that they had in fact received some form of conservation training. While a few of these officers received such training as part of their personal degree courses, most notably the CS POs/APOs, it was revealed that the majority of the officers had participated within internal FRCA training programmes which, often held in conjunction with environmental groups such as English Nature and the RSPB, focused on conservation related issues (Table 5.5). Unfortunately, because of the structured nature of the postal questionnaire little information was obtained concerning the precise content of these internal training days. However, following interviews with the POs and APOs in both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, it was revealed that these in house training sessions covered both the theory of nature conservation as well as 'in

field' advice on the practical application of conservation principles. As one of the APOs in the Cotswold Hills ESA outlined:

'We have had a lot of courses and things over the years ... they have always been hands on type of courses as well as the theory, you know, where best to plant hedges, what species to include ...'.

Source of Conservation Training	No. FRCA POs/APOs
No Training	0
University	5
In House	32
Combination of University and In House	23
TOTAL	60

Table 5.5 Number of FRCA POs/APOs with conservation training (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

Recognising that such training takes place, some individuals within the environmental groups believe that a step is being made to improve the conservation experience and knowledge of the FRCA POs/APOs. Indeed, the agricultural officer for the RSPB in a recent interview professed that, in her opinion:

"things are improving. Certainly, some of the FRCA people I've met, they're very variable, some are died-in-the-wool agriculturists and some of them now generally come from environmental and ecology backgrounds and have learnt about agriculture".

However, while she spoke in terms of the growing conservation expertise among some of the FRCA POs/APOs, she remained hesitant in stating an overall improvement to the FRCA officers' knowledge of conservation. Instead, she represented the RSPB and many other environmental groups interested in agricultural conservation by calling for continued project officer training in conservation management. Whether the FRCA will follow the recommendations of the environmental groups and place more emphasis on project officer environmental training is at this stage unclear, but it is interesting to note that amongst the FRCA POs/APOs there are diverse opinions and personal interests vis-à-vis agri-environmental conservation. Drawing upon data collected through the postal questionnaire, it has been revealed that, on a scale of one to five (i.e. one being of little importance, and five being very important), 50 per cent of the FRCA POs/APOs returning the questionnaire stated that in their opinion it is very important for farmers to integrate environmental practices on their individual farms. However, there was still a significant proportion of the POs/APOs who believed that it is not highly important that farmers should farm in an environmentally friendly way (Table 5.6).

Level of Importance	No. FRCA POs/APOs
1 - Very Important	30
2	9
3	12
4	7
5 - Least Importance	2

Table 5.6 Level of importance which FRCA POs/APOs assign to agri-environmental conservation (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

This was further supported in interviews conducted with the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs/APOs where it was revealed that, while some of the POs/APOs are personally interested in conservation, others remain slightly reserved in their opinions. For example, the Breckland ESA PO expressed a keen interest in nature conservation and outlined that despite his original training in agriculture, he independently read for an Open University degree within which he choose to take specific ecological units to further his own interest.

"I actually did an OU degree during my employment with ADAS, which I took ecological units within that, so I did ecology, biology ... because, well I've always had that interest".

Likewise, the Cotswold Hills ESA PO outlined why he had originally applied for the position to implement an agri-environmental scheme, highlighting his personal interest in the environment and, in particular, how he sees the environment as part of the whole farm system.

"I'm not an ecologist, I am an agriculturist, but I have always been interested in ... well a couple of things I think led me to apply for the job. Yes I have always had an interest in the environment and I've also always been interested in the whole farm, what makes the whole farm tick".

In comparison, however, one of the Cotswold Hills ESA APOs, when asked if he had a personal interest in conservation confessed that:

"not really, no. I mean I was a general agricultural advisor and an agronomist. I suppose I spent all of my time killing things. I enjoy it [the environment], but I see it more as a technical thing rather than as an interest thing".

Thus, while many of the FRCA POs/APOs exhibit similar characteristics in terms of their gender, age, educational and professional backgrounds, their personal opinions and interests vis-à-vis agri-environmental conservation remain diverse.

In seeking to understand the life world of the individual FRCA PO APO, therefore, it is evident that the majority of POs/APOs possess an in-depth knowledge and experience of agricultural related issues. Many have received formal educational training in agricultural production techniques. They have a history of being employed in the state advisory service and

have gained experience of working with and advising farming communities. The majority of POs/APOs have received training in conservation related issues and some bring a personal interest in the environment to their duties as agri-environmental policy implementers. The extent to which the knowledge and experience of the FRCA PO APO influences the implementation of agri-environmental schemes will be discussed throughout the analysis, however, it is evident from the postal questionnaire and interviews conducted in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, that the lifeworld of the individual PO APO is further shaped by a number of statutory and bureaucratic controls imposed by MAFF and the FRCA, which greatly influences the administrative and implementary system of UK agri-environmental schemes.

5.3 Influence of MAFF's Rules and Expectations

Under EU Regulation 2078 92/EEC, the development of national agri-environmental schemes and the actions of national agricultural policy makers, such as MAFF, have been naturally influenced and shaped by the EU. While Member State policy makers have been permitted a relative degree of autonomy in terms of the specific schemes that they may formulate, there is a legal obligation to implement an agri-environmental policy that encompasses the objectives of the Agricultural Directorate as set out in the form of Regulation 2078 92/EEC (Whitby, 1996). In terms of implementing national agri-environmental schemes, however, Regulation 2078/92/EEC encompasses the principle of subsidiarity whereby the EU has a relatively marginal influence over the implementation strategies adopted within individual Member States. As a result, agri-environmental schemes formulated under EU Regulation 2078/92/EEC have, throughout Europe, been implemented in many different ways, often in accordance with national political and administrative structures (see Whitby, 1996). Wilson (1994, 1995) has outlined, for example, that within the Federal state of Germany national agri-environmental schemes are implemented in accordance with a regional strategy whereby each of the sixteen Lander have the responsibility for formulating, implementing and funding regional schemes that comply to EU agri-environmental objectives. The UK, on the other hand, like many other European countries such as Spain (Garrido and Moyano, 1996), have drawn upon their traditional structuralist approach to policy and implemented the national agri-environmental schemes within a centralised bureaucratic government (Palumbo, 1987; Gilg, 1996; Winter, 1996).

Following a hierarchical system of administration, which is indicative of classical political theories (Weber, 1947; Jones, 1973; Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1979), agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales are currently formulated, administered and implemented by three distinct spatial and political levels (Fig. 5.2). At the 'top' of the hierarchy, the agri-environmental schemes are formulated by central MAFF office, whereupon they are then

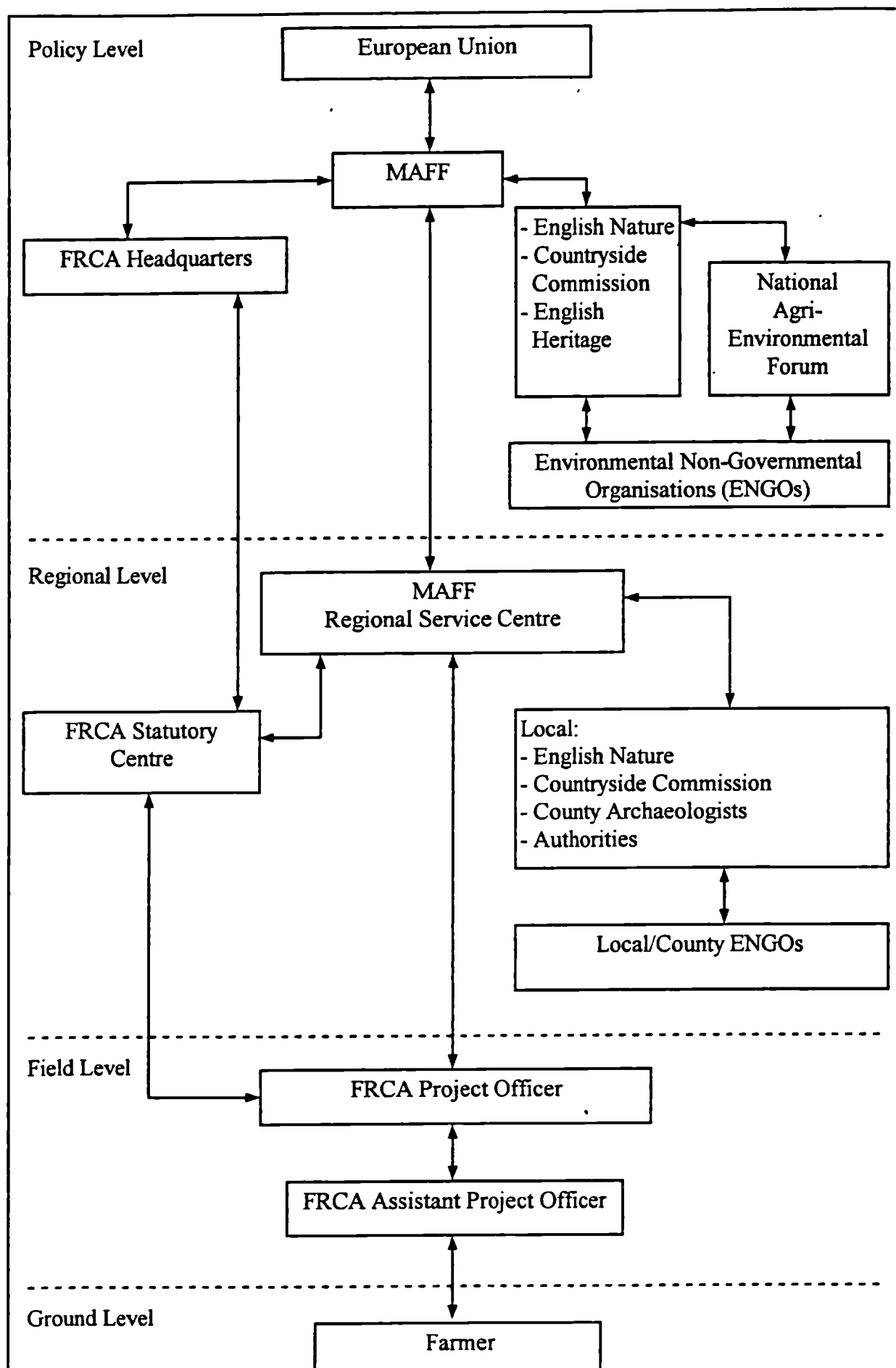


Fig. 5.3. Implementation Structure for UK Agri-Environmental Schemes
(Source: Author)

administered by MAFF's Regional Service Centres (RSCs), and finally implemented by the FRCA POs and APOs located at the ground level. As Part II of this thesis outlined, this centralised approach to policy is indicative of a number of functional departments within the British Government where central offices, such as MAFF and the Department of Education have frequently sought the managerial resources of their regional counterparts in order to facilitate the implementation and integration of central administrative tasks into the locality (Hoggart, 1984; Rhodes, 1988; Winter, 1996). In doing so central government has often sought a number of controls such as statutory provisions, adjudicatory functions, inspections and audits in order to ensure that within this centralised policy process, regional and local actors execute ministerial objectives (Lowi, 1972; Laffin, 1986; Kaufmann, 1986; Wirth, 1986; Jones, 1995) (see section 2.2).

Regional Service Centres

Indeed, exhibiting structuralist notions of power, MAFF has employed a number of resources, such as statutory legislation and policy documentation, in order to define the roles and objectives of the RSCs and FRCA POs/APOs, and in turn ensure that these ministerial actors implement MAFF's agri-environmental objectives and not their own. This was clearly outlined by the head of MAFF's Conservation Policy Division who explained that in terms of implementing the agri-environmental schemes:

"... the object of the exercise is that we [MAFF central office] tell them what to do and they get on and do it. And if there is a breakdown in those communications then we put it right as soon as we can. Effectively there are very clear instructions as to how everyone should operate. ..." (emphasis added) (Boyling, 1997).

In terms of the objectives of the RSCs, for example, MAFF has, through the Ministry's Citizen Charter, asserted that the role of the RSC within the policy process is one of administration and not policy formulation.

"The role of the Regional Service Centre is to administer UK Government and EC policy. It is not in itself responsible for policy formulation" (emphasis added) (MAFF, 1994:17).

This is reinforced by MAFF (1995) in their Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for agri-environmental schemes, where the responsibilities and work objectives of the RSCs are defined in terms of administrative and managerial roles, rather than policy decision-making functions. For example, MAFF (1996a) asserts that in terms of administering agri-environmental schemes, their RSCs are responsible for:

- "processing applications and determining their eligibility in accordance with relevant legislation and scheme rules

- issuing formal agreements to successful applicants
- processing claims for payment, determining eligibility and arranging payment of valid claims
- responding to queries or concerns from applicants, potential applicants and agreement holders in relation to the schemes, carrying out compliance monitoring, including field inspections, to check that management prescriptions and other scheme rules are being followed, and dealing with breaches of scheme rules” (MAFF, 1996a 9)

Acting as a link between the implementers of policy and the higher echelons of policy makers situated within MAFF central office (Fig. 5.2), the RSCs are also expected to transfer information down to the POs/APOs and in turn act as a gatekeeper, transferring information from the FRCA PO/APO to MAFF Headquarters concerning the applicability of national agri-environmental objectives in the locality (MAFF, 1995; 1996a).

This Weberian hierarchical relationship between agri-environmental policy actors was reinforced by the FRCA POs/APOs in response to a series of questions within the postal questionnaire concerning their relationship with each of the different policy levels, and, in particular, what level of communication the POs/APOs currently experience with MAFF central office and their RSCs. In terms of their relationship with MAFF central office, 90 per cent of the FRCA POs/APOs stated that they had no form of direct contact or communication with any individual located within the central office. For those few officers that were in contact with individuals at the top of the policy hierarchy, this tended only to occur on average, between six to ten times a year and was primarily in relation to non agri-environmental issues. However, in accordance with MAFF’s MoU, all of the POs/APOs responding to the questionnaire stated that they were in frequent contact with MAFF’s RSCs, with many officers stating that contact usually occurred on a weekly basis, and in relation to a plurality of agri-environmental issues. These included, wherever the PO/APO forwarded applications to the RSC for processing, advising the RSC on the acceptability of individual applications, advising the RSC on any amendments to individual agreements and, in turn, receiving information from the RSC concerning individual agreement holdings. This was further explained by the Cotswold Hills ESA project officer who outlined the ‘official’ relationship between the RSC and the POs/APOs in terms of administering and implementing the ESA scheme.

“I mean basically you have to work fairly closely with the RSC ... the actual methodology, is that when the application comes in, either directly from the farmer or via us, it is formally recorded by the MAFF RSC. They open a file, they are responsible for that. They are responsible for providing any MAFF administrative background information which now also involves information on the IACS system which lists all other government grant schemes ... The file then comes to the project officer to do some ground mapping and negotiate with the farmer any detail that is required ... then when you think everything is right in terms of the maps and everything else is tied up, it then goes back to MAFF with a recommendation to formally offer the agreement”.

While this administrative nature of the agri-environmental schemes naturally requires close contact and communication between the POs/APOs and MAFF's RSCs, their close working relationship can additionally be explained by the fact that the majority (87%) of the FRCA POs/APOs are currently based within MAFF's RSCs, where they are physically situated alongside the RSC staff responsible for administering the agri-environmental schemes within the different regions of England and Wales (Fig. 5.4). This is a relatively recent situation as prior to the privatisation of ADAS in April 1997, the majority of the POs/APOs implementing MAFF's agri-environmental schemes were located within regional statutory ADAS centres which were often situated away from MAFF's RSCs (Fig. 5.3). However, in light of the move towards the privatisation of ADAS, MAFF decided to relocate many of the regional offices of the newly formed FRCA and provide office accommodation within their RSCs. In doing so, MAFF and the FRCA believed that communication between the administrators and implementers of the agri-environmental schemes would be simplified, in addition to creating a distinct division between the statutory FRCA and ADAS who is no longer directly involved in the implementation of MAFF's agri-environmental schemes (Baker, 1997). As one project officer currently implementing the North Peak ESA outlined before the FRCA offices were moved to MAFF's RSCs:

"It has been very confusing being in different offices, sometimes we don't know where people are or how to contact them. The change will make everything easier for us".

In some areas it has been more problematic in co-locating the FRCA POs and MAFF's RSCs, as the Cotswold Hills ESA project officer explained:

"... you get some of the East Anglian ones you couldn't physically co-locate because the RSC is at Cambridge, and with the Broads the project officer needs to be in Norwich or somewhere like that, close to the Broads".

However, such cases are rare. Currently, the majority (96%) of the FRCA POs/APOs are able to be in direct contact with the RSC staff and thus enable the RSCs to follow MAFF's MoU and liaise closely with the FRCA POs/APOs.

FRCA Project Officers and Assistant Project Officers

As employees of MAFF the FRCA POs/APOs, like the RSCs, are expected to operate in accordance with MAFF's MoU. MAFF recognises that the precise role of the POs may vary from scheme to scheme, but within their MoU MAFF asserts that in all cases there are responsibilities vis-à-vis the implementation of agri-environmental schemes which the POs and APOs should adhere to. These include:



Fig. 5.3. ADAS Statutory Centres in England and Wales (Source: ADAS, 1992)

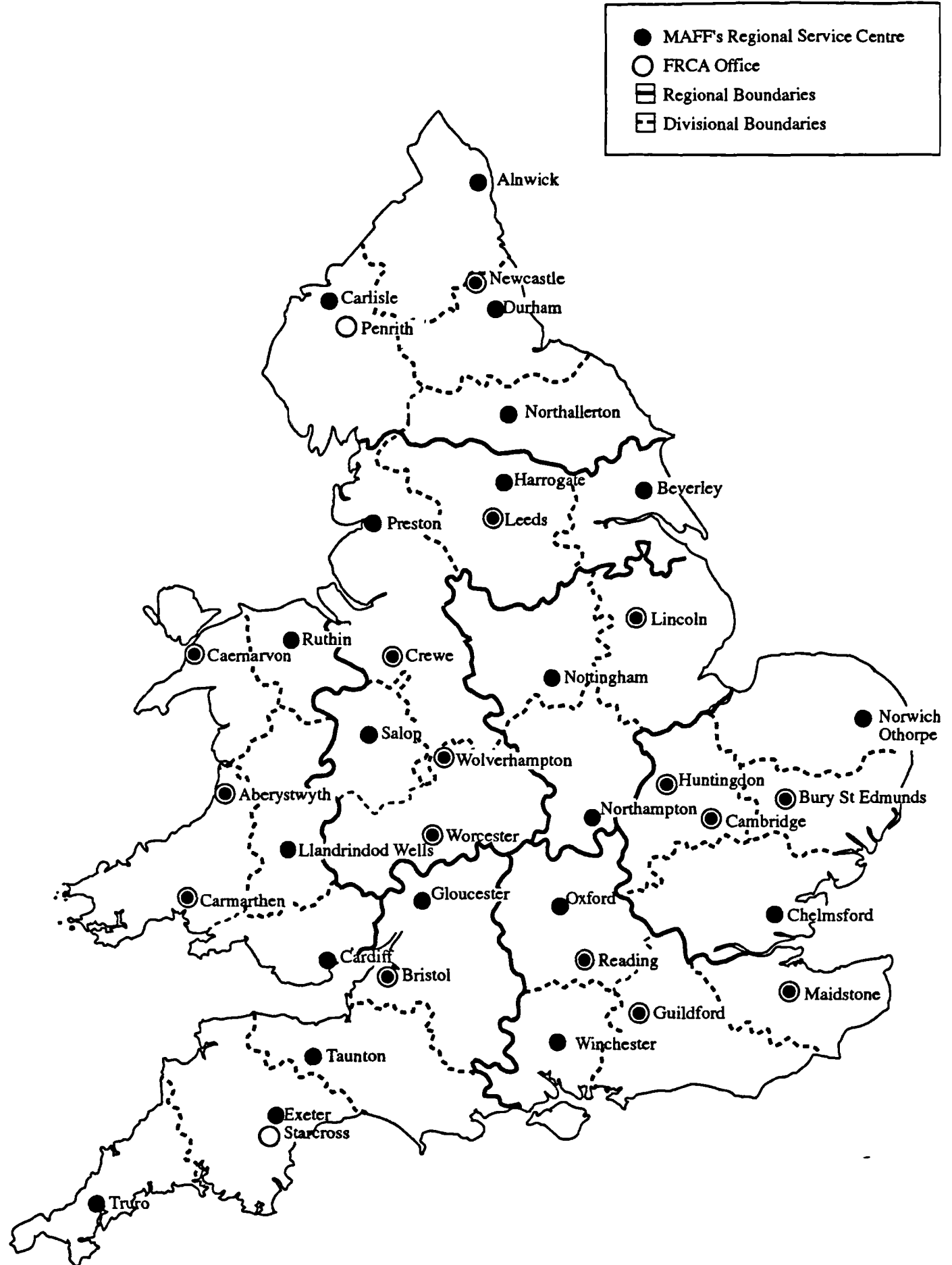


Fig. 5.4. MAFF's Regional Service Centres and FRCA Offices in England and Wales
(Source: MAFF, 1992)

- “promoting schemes among the farming community and providing advice to prospective applicants,
- advising MAFF on the technical acceptability of individual applications;
- providing advice and guidance to agreement holders on the practical application of scheme rules and procedures and on managing their land in the most effective way to achieve the objectives of the scheme, in addition, they provide advice on any farming, conservation or public access issue which may arise through participation in the schemes,
- checking compliance with scheme rules during site visits;
- liaising with other bodies on possible conflicts of interest, avoidance of dual funding and issues where speciality expertise would be of value, and
- providing initial advice to farmers and landowners on all environmental land management schemes (including non-MAFF schemes) available to them” (MAFF, 1995.15).

It is evident from the postal questionnaire that this MoU has had a significant impact on how the individual PO/APO define and interpret their role within the implementation of agri-environmental schemes. Bound by statutory and bureaucratic rules, it is evident from the postal questionnaire that the POs/APOs define their work objectives in accordance with MAFF’s MoU. Within the postal questionnaire the POs/APOs were asked to state what their main work objectives were in relation to their specific agri-environmental scheme. While some answers were far more detailed than others, each of the POs/APOs commonly defined their work objectives in terms of establishing and administering management agreements; promoting schemes; acting on behalf of MAFF; advising MAFF; liaising with other organisations; maintaining and enhancing the wildlife value of the area; acting as an interface between MAFF and the farmers; establishing a sound relationship with agreement holders and acting as a one stop shop for advice (Table 5.7). With the exception of one or two of these objectives, such as the ‘maintenance and enhancement of the wildlife value’, it is evident that the POs/APOs simply reiterated the objectives outlined in MAFF’s MoU. Further, as employees of MAFF, it was not surprising to find that many of the POs/APOs defined their role primarily in terms of an advisor and implementer of government policy (Table 5.8). In the postal questionnaire the POs/APOs asserted that they see themselves as advisors operating on behalf of MAFF, implementing MAFF’s objectives and not their own personal interests. As the following quotes from a number of the FRCA POs/APOs highlight:

“Essentially I am an advisor and implementer of policy”

“Basically, I’m an implementer of government policy, but with a friendly face! We aim to gain farmers co-operation not dictate to them”.

“[I am a] ... technical advisor encouraging beneficial environmental practices on agricultural land in the countryside, on behalf of MAFF”.

“My first duty as project officer is to my client, MAFF”.

Work Objectives (non-exclusive categories)	No. FRCA POs/APOs
Establish and administer management agreements	42
Scheme promotion	40
To implement the schemes on behalf of MAFF	22
To advise MAFF	21
To liaise with other organisations	21
Maintain and enhance the wildlife value of the landscape	14
To act as an interface between MAFF and farmers	10
To ensure that dual funding of agri-environmental schemes does not occur	4
To establish a sound relationship with farmers	4
To act as a one stop shop for advice	3

Table 5.7 FRCA POs/APOs perceptions of their work objectives (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

Role of FRCA PO/APO (non-exclusive categories)	No. FRCA POs/APOs
Advisor	32
Implementer of government policy	25
Bridge between MAFF and farmers	17
A guide to the schemes	16
Friend to the farmers	13
Catalyst to the schemes	4

Table 5.8 FRCA POs/APOs perceptions of their role title (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

Essentially, the FRCA POs/APOs represent Weber's (1947) subordinate bureaucrat. Employed by MAFF, they are expected to implement their superiors' objectives, and, through the MoU, MAFF may ensure that the POs/APOs understand and adhere to their responsibilities. In this context, it is evident that the FRCA PO/APO does not follow the arguments of political-economy theorists, such as Barrett and Fudge (1981) and Cloke and Little (1990). Where these analysts assert that actors will negotiate and bargain with one another in order to further their own definitions, interests and objectives, little negotiation appears to take place between the POs/APOs and MAFF. Rather, bound by the MoU, the POs/APOs accept the objectives of their superiors and seek to implement the agri-environmental schemes within the administrative and implementary system that has been defined by MAFF. According to Wirth (1986), however, bureaucrats will be accountable to both internal and external sources of authority. Indeed, while the POs/APOs are influenced and controlled by MAFF legislation, they are additionally embedded within the bureaucracy and hierarchy of the FRCA which seeks to control the activities of the POs/APOs and in turn assist MAFF by ensuring that their MoU is met by the FRCA POs/APOs.

5.4 Influence of the FRCA

Like its predecessor ADAS, the FRCA is a relatively large bureaucratic and hierarchical organisation (see Lowe et al., 1997). Currently, 480 people are employed within the agency, of which 21 per cent are represented by the POs/APOs. Of the remaining employees the FRCA provides a number of administrative positions, in addition to specialist posts within their resource planning groups which consist of, for example, cartographers, surveyors, biologists, ecologists and hydrologists. In terms of implementing the agri-environmental schemes, the majority of FRCA employees are involved by either providing specialist advice and support to the POs/APOs or by occupying higher administrative positions from which the work of the POs/APOs is monitored and assessed in accordance with MAFF's MoU. In order to gain a clearer picture of how different actors within the FRCA are involved in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes, the POs/APOs were asked in the postal questionnaire to indicate on a scale of one to nine the level of contact which they have with specific individuals and/or groups within the FRCA.

According to the POs/APOs surveyed, most contact is made between POs and APOs implementing the same agri-environmental scheme (Table 5.9).

Level of Contact	Members of the FRCA
1 -Most Contact	POs administering the same scheme
2	APOs administering the same scheme
3	Team Leader
4	Resource planning group
5	POs administering other schemes
6	APOs administering other schemes
7	Group Leader
8	Contract Manager
9 - Least Contact	Statutory Centre Manager

Table 5.9 Level of contact POs/APOs have with individuals in the FRCA (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

It is important to note that where a team of POs and APOs exists the officers will tend to work alongside one another, but as one of the Cotswold Hills ESA APOs outlined, one PO will usually take on an authoritative position, co-ordinating and managing the work of the ground level agri-environmental team. As the APO explained:

“... officially Richard [PO] is our group leader. He will often go out into the field on his own and he does have some farmers who he manages, but usually he’s there to oversee what we do and if we have any problems we can go to him as our co-ordinator”.

Following this, the POs/APOs are most frequently in contact with their FRCA Team Manager for reasons related to progress reports, staff management, team co-ordination and, in exchanging advice and information related to the specific agri-environmental schemes. Within the regional offices of the FRCA, the Team Manager in effect acts as a ‘boss’ to the POs/APOs. It is their role to oversee all agri-environmental schemes implemented from their respective FRCA office, and, in particular, to advise the POs/APOs and ensure that they are implementing the agri-environmental schemes in accordance with MAFF’s MoU. As the Cotswold Hills ESA project officer explained:

“... once the scheme is launched he [the Team Manager] has overall responsibility for the ESAs and other agri-environmental schemes in his [sic] area, including resource allocation and delivery of whatever is required by MAFF which has been agreed by the MoU”.

Additionally, the Team Manager acts as a link between the POs/APOs and the higher echelons of the FRCA represented by the Group Leader, the individual FRCA Statutory Centre Manager and the FRCA Contract Manager. As Table 5.9 outlines, the POs/APOs have little direct contact with these individual policy actors. Where direct contact does occur with the Group Leader, for example, it is usually at general meetings or sometimes in the absence of the Team Manager. The Statutory Centre Manager, on the other hand, rarely comes into contact with the POs/APOs and where he or she does, it is often at meetings concerning non agri-environmental issues. Finally, at the ‘top’ of the FRCA hierarchy, the project officers are rarely in contact

with the Contract Manager who is in charge of the overall co-ordination and resource allocation of all agri-environmental schemes implemented by the FRCA. Wherever contact occurs with the POs/APOs this is usually mediated through the individual Team Managers, where the Contract Manager will seek to either pass on information from MAFF central office or, in turn, receive information from the POs/APOs and the Team Managers, and where necessary refer these to MAFF central office. For example, under the MoU the POs/APOs are required to provide weekly statistics outlining the number of new applications which the individual officers have recommended to their MAFF RSC. This information is given to the Team Manager who will subsequently refer the statistics to the FRCA Contract Manager, whereupon, they will be sent to MAFF central office to illustrate how well MAFF's schemes are performing at the ground level and whether MAFF's MoU is being met by the FRCA. As the Cotswold Hills ESA PO outlined when discussing his relationship with his Team Manager:

"... I would speak to him at least once a week, usually see him at least once a week, and certainly during the critical periods of processing new applications, then he was fed with stats [statistics] every week in terms of where we had got to, and whether the MoU objectives were being met ... when I say MoU objectives these were in terms of delivery and when recommendations of new applications are made to the MAFF RSC. He [Team Manager] would then pass the stats on to Guildford [where the Contract Manager is located]".

Operating at the ground level environment the street-level bureaucrat, according to Lipsky (1980), will be geographically distanced from their bureaucratic superiors and will, as a result, operate in surroundings remote from any form of hierarchical authority (see section 2.4). However, by receiving such statistical information the FRCA Contract Manager and MAFF central office are, in effect, able to monitor and assess the work of the individual FRCA PO/APO in terms of their ability to meet targets set by MAFF in relation to the number of farmers enrolled into the agri-environmental schemes. Similarly, Lowe et al. (1997:147) have recently found that within the commercial arm of ADAS, the effectiveness and efficiency of pollution advisors were "typically measured in quantitative terms and displayed as performance measures and targets achieved". Attempts by the FRCA to control and monitor the work of the POs/APOs was clearly outlined by the Cotswold Hills ESA PO who explained that, although the FRCA POs/APOs do not have to fill out any official reports, there is a performance appraisal system which currently operates within the FRCA and effectively monitors the POs'/APOs' work. As he outlined:

"... we don't fill out much. The way that FRCA operates in terms of staff management is basically at the moment working on a system that ADAS developed which is a sort of performance appraisal and development system, so that every year you have agreed objectives and your performance is assessed against those objectives".

Additionally, the FRCA POs/APOs are required under the MoU to compile and maintain detailed reports and files on each individual agreement holder. Within these files the PO/APO

must record any interaction which they have had with the farmers, why the contact took place, and any decisions that were made by the PO APO concerning the individual management agreement. Such a routine of filling out reports is replicated in a number of organisations, such as the former NRA, where Lowe et al. (1997:102) found, in relation to 'Bob', their pollution inspector, that "for each report he [Bob] receives, a form has to be filled out in triplicate: one for the computer, one for the filing system and one for himself". In terms of the FRCA PO APO this routine of filling out reports on any decision that they make or any contact which they have with agreement holders effectively limits their level of autonomy within the field.

Concomitantly, the work of the FRCA POs/APOs may be indirectly monitored through the FRCA's pay system, whereby the POs/APOs and other FRCA staff members involved in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes are paid on an hourly basis. According to the FRCA contract manager, this is a fair method of payment as it eliminates the possibility of tensions arising between different POs/APOs whose level of work will naturally depend upon the size of their respective agri-environmental schemes, and the number of farmers participating in the scheme (White, 1996). In order to calculate their salaries, each staff member involved in the implementation of the schemes must fill in a time sheet at the end of each week, recording the number of hours spent working on their respective scheme(s). This information is then placed in a large database which at the end of each quarter prints out a total of the number of hours each individual has worked on the schemes, and they are paid accordingly. However, if an individual PO/APO reduces the level of input which they would normally put into the implementation of 'their' scheme(s) this will be identified within the database and made known to their respective Team Managers, who oversee the performance appraisals of the individual POs/APOs.

Thus, through controls such as performance measures, agreement holders' reports and the FRCA pay system, the POs APOs appear to be tightly circumscribed within the bureaucracy of the FRCA, and the overall agri-environmental implementation network defined by MAFF's MoU. In this context, the FRCA POs/APOs acting as street-level bureaucrats evidently do not possess as much autonomy and discretion as Prottas (1977), Hanf and Scherpf (1978) and Lipsky (1980) postulate (see Chapter 2). Instead, as Sabatier (1986:322) recognises, "policy makers can affect what happens on the ground by structuring the implementation process through relatively clear directives and through affecting the number, the resources and to some extent the preferences of street-level bureaucrats". Sabatier (1986) does not dispute Lipsky's (1980) claim that street-level bureaucrats are extremely important in the implementation of policies, but he stresses that often, official policy makers will possess legislative resources that permit greater levels of influence and power over the street-level bureaucrat (see also Wirth, 1986). Indeed, the FRCA POs/APOs are not alone in experiencing such hierarchical authority. In their study of social service delivery in Aber, North Wales, Grant and Black (1981) found

that social workers, like the FRCA POs/APOs, operated within an environment that was largely defined by their social services department, and their statutory obligations to provide social work and services to predefined groups of clients. According to one social worker, they are permitted a relative degree of freedom in their day to day work, but while they are able to make individual decisions, their actions are still accountable to their bureaucratic superiors within the social services department. As the social worker went on to outline:

“there is always somebody looking over your shoulder all the time, wanting to know what’s going on ... I am able to develop my own style, but I am not allowed to develop it on my own” (in Grant and Black, 1981:6).

Sabatier (1986) did go on to argue, however, that any attempt to tightly circumscribe street-level bureaucrats through the imposition of legislation, performance targets and policy compliance measures, can be counter-productive (see also Elmore, 1978; Wirth, 1986). Thus, while it is recognised that many street-level bureaucrats may not be permitted total autonomy in their day to day work, Sabatier (1986) argues that a balance should be struck between the totality and triviality of bureaucratic accountability. Indeed, in relation to the FRCA POs/APOs, MAFF and the FRCA recognise that, despite their methods of accountability, the POs/APOs must be afforded some degree of discretionary freedom when implementing MAFF’s agri-environmental objectives within the locality. This is clearly evident where MAFF is increasingly taking on board the advice and recommendations of the individual PO/APO when deciding to permit amendments to individual agri-environmental agreements.

5.5 Discretionary Freedom of the FRCA Project Officer

One of the criticisms of implementing national agri-environmental schemes is the fact that each individual farm holding is distinct and a blanket approach to agri-environmental conservation, as approached through the schemes, can not account for the intricacies and distinctiveness of the individual farm ecosystem (see Countryside Commission, 1996, Winter, 1996). At the recent Agriculture Select Committees’ enquiry into ‘ESAs and other UK agri-environmental schemes’, the Countryside Commission (1996) and English Nature (1996) voiced their concerns in relation to this issue and suggested that “agri-environment schemes must be able to reflect and build upon regional diversity and local distinctiveness in the countryside” (English Nature, 1996:7). MAFF recognises that often individual agreement holders may wish to amend specific scheme rules in order to suit their individual circumstances, and, as a result, a degree of flexibility has been written into the scheme rules, whereby an individual farmer in consultation with their respective FRCA PO APO may apply to the MAFF RSC for a derogation to their individual agreement. This may include a derogation to cut their grass before the date specified within the scheme rules, spraying weeds such as Ragwort where

normally it is not permitted, or delaying the construction of walls, fences, hedgerows and ponds.

Under MAFF's MoU, it is the duty of the FRCA PO/APO to administer the derogations by consulting with the agreement holders and advising them where a derogation may be needed in order to enhance the environmental quality of their land. As one of the APOs in the Cotswold Hills ESA explained:

"Well the actual guidelines if you like are written down and that is part of their agreement, but we can give derogations to allow them to vary one side or another. Well put it this way, if they want to do something which the rules say they can't we can recommend a derogation if it is in the best interest of the environmental objectives".

Following consultation with the agreement holder, the FRCA PO/APO must, under the MoU, recommend the derogation to the MAFF RSC before any changes are made on the individual farm. Within the RSC, it is the responsibility of the Environmental Schemes Manager to assess the proposed derogation and to sign the official letter from MAFF informing the agreement holder whether their request for a derogation has been granted. According to the Cotswold Hills ESA PO, "... derogations are rarely turned down". However, before any decision is made the Environmental Schemes Manager will take into consideration a plurality of issues such as seasonal variations, the environmental implications of the proposed derogation, and how the derogation will relate to any other agri-environmental scheme or designation present on the individual agreement holding. A lot of this information is provided by the PO/APO who recommended the derogation to the MAFF RSC. For the majority of the routine derogations, such as amendments to cutting/grazing dates and weed control, the Environmental Schemes Manager will take on board the advice of the PO/APO and sign the official letter of approval without questioning the individual officer's judgement and recommendation. As the Cotswold Hills ESA PO went on to outline:

"... with the normal and straightforward variations, the project officer's recommendations will stand. Some of the situations with low precedence, it has never been questioned or debated".

This was further supported by the Breckland ESA PO:

"Some things are fairly straightforward where precedence has been set, then it is more or less a formality to agree certain changes, and examples of that would be weed control on permanent grassland where in our ESA they are not allowed to use an overall boom sprayer without permission".

Thus, while the PO APO must still operate in accordance with bureaucratic rules, their knowledge of the local environment and their subsequent recommendations and advice are recognised and accepted within the echelons of MAFF. Indeed, the Breckland and Cotswold

Hills POs outlined that with many of the routine derogations they are confident in the knowledge that MAFF's RSCs will accept their recommendations and, as a result, the POs will often inform the farmers to go ahead with the derogation before any official letter is sent from MAFF. According to a number of farmers interviewed within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, this action by the POs is imperative as often it is necessary to carry out the derogation immediately following the PO's on site recommendation. As one farmer in the Breckland ESA outlined:

"... when it comes to getting derogations to do things he [project officer] will come out and say 'yes, okay. You know its got to be done, do it. I'll rubber stamp it and the letter due follows'. Which is great, that's how it should be. There's no good Bill coming out and saying, 'yes I see what you mean, I'll have to refer it back', otherwise it takes weeks and if you've got a problem it needs sorting out straight away, it doesn't want to disappear and come back in a few weeks time".

This was supported by other agreement holders within the case study ESAs:

"I sometimes contact him, for permission to use herbicides ... we've discussed it and yea, no problems at all. He gave me verbal permission followed by a letter, so we just got on with it" [Breckland ESA participant].

"We wanted to put a fence around our new bit of grassland at the top so that we could put our sheep in, because obviously its part of the agreement that you should graze the field. But before we could go ahead we had to wait for the official ministry go ahead and it was on and on and on ... in the end we just went ahead and did it. ... I asked the project officer what are we going to do and he said 'well, it will get approved, so I would just go on and do it'. It has to be like that, if it wasn't, if it was run entirely by the official then it would be very irksome because its pretty ponderously slow" [Cotswold Hills ESA, participant].

MAFF recognises that such decisions are taken on the spot by the POs/APOs and, as a result, they are currently considering a possible system whereby the FRCA POs/APOs are given greater powers of authority to issue the derogation on behalf of MAFF. According to the Cotswold Hills ESA PO, "it would still have to be in some sort of written format. It could be on some pad which you copied onto the file. It must be on file because basically it is a variation of a legal agreement". However, despite these statutory requirements such a possible system is indicative of the level of trust that MAFF places in the professionalism and discretionary powers of the individual PO/APO.

The issue of trust, as Chapter 2 outlined, has been a central feature of many policy studies which have in particular focused upon the relationship between street-level bureaucrats and their hierarchical superiors (see Lipsky, 1980; Laffin., 1986). Breton and Wintrobe (1982) argued, for example, that, if policy makers wish for their objectives to be implemented within the locality, then they need to trust in the professionalism of the ground level implementers. Laffin (1986) went as far as to argue that the implementation of policies is ultimately

dependent upon the level of trust and respect that officials have for the professionalism of the street-level bureaucrat. Indeed, while analysis has already indicated that the implementation of UK agri-environmental schemes is, in part, shaped by the various methods of bureaucratic accountability, MAFF trusts in the professionalism of the individual FRCA PO/APO to make appropriate decisions and recommendations in the field, as evident in relation to the administration of derogations. Additionally, however, this level of trust is exhibited by the fact that MAFF has left it to the discretion of the individual PO/APO to adopt appropriate methodologies and strategies in order to implement their respective agri-environmental schemes. However, while political-economy analysts, such as Barrett and Fudge (1981) and Cloke and Little (1990) argue that individual bureaucrats will draw upon their professionalism and utilise such trust and discretionary freedom in order to exert their own interests and objectives, evidence from the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs indicates that, like the coping strategies of Lipsky's (1980) street-level bureaucrat, the FRCA PO/APO will use their own knowledge and judgement in order to adopt appropriate strategies that enable them to implement MAFF's agri-environmental schemes as efficiently and effectively as possible within specific local circumstances.

5.6 Implementation Strategies Adopted by the FRCA Project Officer

As Chapter 4 outlined, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs are fundamentally different in terms of scheme requirements, participation levels, and length of existence. The Breckland ESA scheme targets specific habitats, most notably heathland, while the Cotswold Hills ESA is a whole farm scheme. Further, the Cotswold Hills ESA is a younger scheme with higher rates of farmer participation than the Breckland ESA scheme. From interviews conducted with the POs/APOs implementing the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, it is evident that these local farm and scheme factors have greatly influenced the strategies adopted by the individual POs/APOs when implementing the agri-environmental schemes in the locality.

In terms of initially promoting the ESAs, the POs/APOs revealed that in both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, the schemes were promoted through the use of promotional literature and land holder meetings. A number of those farmers interviewed within the ESAs outlined for example that:

"... there was a meeting in a local hotel where they [POs/APOs] explained it. I had, had the bumf before that literally about a month before that ... I went to the meeting and they gave us some more details about it" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

"They [MAFF] sent me an information pack telling me what I would have to do, or not to do and then I went to this meeting that was held in a hotel in Andoversford, just down the road" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

"... there was a meeting a few years ago in the Carnegie Rooms in Thetford. There was a lot of farmers there all within the ESA area, and general ESA problems/benefits were explained and questions asked" (Breckland ESA, participant).

"Everybody was sent a full information pack about it" (Breckland ESA, non-participant).

However, following the launch of the ESA schemes, both the Breckland and the Cotswold Hills ESA POs/APOs revealed that in light of local farm and scheme factors, different implementation strategies were adopted, when, in accordance with MAFF's MoU the POs/APOs sought to enrol farmers into individual ESA agreements.

Breckland ESA

The Breckland ESA is dominated by large landowners, such as the Forestry Commission, the Ministry of Defence and the Elveden and Euston Estates. Owning approximately 52 per cent of the land area covered by the Breckland ESA, it is not surprising that approximately 72 per cent of the ESA habitat target areas (i.e. Heathland and wetlands) are situated on these large land holdings. Accordingly, the Breckland ESA PO outlined how he decided to initially target the large landowners within the ESA in order to try to enrol extensive areas of vulnerable habitat into the part-farm scheme. He asserted that:

"... as most of the heathland, which is the habitat which we are really targeting, as that was mainly on areas such as the Stanford Training Ground [owned by the MoD] and the two Estates, well it was obvious that I should try and get them into the scheme first".

In doing so, the Breckland ESA PO went on to outline how he effectively adopted a progressive farmer strategy that has been commonly applied by the PO's predecessors within ADAS (see section 3.3). By targeting larger landowners in the Breckland ESA, the PO felt that other smaller farmers in the area may follow the example of the dominant local farmers and, thus, participate in the ESA scheme. As the PO outlined:

"... I targeted the big obvious ones [farmers] in the hope that they would encourage other, smaller farmers to join".

A number of agri-environmental researchers have highlighted the importance and influence of local farming networks, or, as Wilson (1996:72) describes, 'the dynamics within the farm district', in terms of transferring information, knowledge and experience of agri-environmental schemes to individual farmers. In particular, Wilson (1996) argues that factors such as whether neighbours are participating in an agri-environmental scheme, the influential behaviour of community leaders, or the pace of innovation diffusion within a local farming community may influence individual farmers' decisions to participate in an agri-environmental scheme (see also Jones, 1963, Wilson, 1992). However, it was evident from those interviews conducted with

farmers participating and not participating in the Breckland ESA scheme that the FRCA PO's progressive farmer strategy was largely ineffectual in encouraging smaller farmers to join the scheme. Asked if they ever discussed the ESA scheme with their neighbours three Breckland farmers replied that:

"No, you just stick to farming. We know what each other is spraying but not what we are doing with the ESA strips of the grassland".

"We talk at meetings occasionally. I think that each place has its own particular issues and I've never even thought of talking about it with them".

"We don't talk about the ESA. Obviously we do see them but we don't discuss the scheme".

According to the Brecks Countryside Project officer, this lack of communication between neighbouring farmers can partly be explained by the fact that the farming community within the Brecklands is elitist, with the large estates and landowners not communicating with the smaller farmers. In a recent interview he argued that:

"... the large landowners have good networks amongst one another, but they just don't talk to the smaller farmers and so the experiences and knowledge of the large landowners don't reach the smaller ones".

Such findings have been replicated within a number of other studies that have sought to analyse the role and influence of farming networks on individuals' agri-environmental decisions and actions. Within her study of agri-environmental participation within the North and South Downs, Morris (1993:133) found, for example, that "both adopters and non-adopters became aware of the scheme through similar channels (notably the farming press and ADAS), with neighbouring farmers being of practically no importance in this respect". Additionally, Wilson (1997), in relation to the Cambrian Mountains ESA, found that farmers rarely discussed the ESA scheme with one another. Instead, typical responses from farmers he interviewed included 'don't know how many neighbours joined' and 'never discussed it with them'.

Since launching the scheme ten years ago, the Breckland ESA PO has taken a re-active approach to managing the ESA scheme. A number of those farmers interviewed within the Breckland ESA outlined that, since participating within the scheme, the PO has rarely contacted them since their individual agreements were drawn up. Instead, it has been left to the agreement holders to contact the PO for advice or to request a derogation. As three farmers explained:

"I'm in contact with him, I suppose once or twice a year, usually in June, just before the prescribed period for cutting the grass sward, just to check with him when I should cut the grass".

"I contact him about once or twice a year ... I have a lot of weeds in the meadow - thistles and nettles - if I want to spray them or do something with them I have to contact him and get permission before I can do anything. That's usually the main reason for contacting him".

"Once or twice a year I see him, if that ... if I need him to come and look at a specific problem or there's a specific problem which I think should be drawn to his attention then obviously I ring him and he pops out to have a look".

Additionally, in terms of the non-participants situated within the Breckland ESA, the PO appears to have little contact, if any with such individuals. Indeed, following those interviews conducted with non-participants in the area it was revealed that, with the exception of two former ESA participants, none of the non-participants had any contact with the ESA PO, with one farmer not even realising that the ESA scheme existed. As the non-participants sought to outline:

"No, I've had no contact from anyone promoting the scheme"

"We've had no contact from anyone, apart from just general promotional literature"

"I'm afraid I'm rather ignorant about it all. I've never had any contact with anyone about the scheme. Could you just explain to me what it is".

"I've had contact with the project officer, but not in relation to the ESA scheme".

Deciding to adopt such a reactive approach to managing the Breckland ESA has resulted in the PO becoming the focus of some criticism amongst a number of environmental groups with an interest in the agri-environmental conservation of the Brecklands. According to the Brecks Countryside Project officer, for example, the ESA PO needs to do more to encourage further conservation practices within existing management agreements. Currently, "he may visit a farmer and say 'yes you can put that field into tier II', but he will not look at the rest of the farm and say 'in addition to that you could do that to the woodlands, put a fence here or a pond there'" (Hooton, 1997). Additionally, the Brecks Countryside Project officer went on to argue, that the ESA PO needs to make a greater effort to contact the smaller non-participants within the area:

"The small landowners need to be contacted. There was a survey done in 1993 about how many landowners knew about the ESA and it was surprising that so many in the area didn't know that it existed".

However, the reactive approach adopted by the Breckland ESA PO is partly in reaction to the limited amount of time that he can devote to the implementation of the scheme. In addition to implementing the ESA scheme, the Breckland PO is committed to implementing the Habitat Scheme within Norfolk and Suffolk. Additionally, he is also involved with the implementation of Nitrate Sensitive Areas within East Anglia, and is a member of various executive boards of

groups such as Suffolk FWAG. In the light of such additional work commitments it is not surprising, therefore, that, like Lipsky's (1980) street-level bureaucrat, the Breckland ESA PO has had to adopt various coping strategies in order to implement MAFF's Breckland ESA scheme as efficiently as possible.

Cotswold Hills ESA

With support from five APOs, the individual Cotswold Hills ESA PO has been able to take a more pro-active approach to implementing the Cotswold Hills ESA scheme compared to his colleague in the Brecklands. Implementing one of the youngest ESA schemes, the Cotswold Hills ESA PO and APOs were, at the time of the field survey, actively promoting the scheme throughout the Cotswold farming community. As a whole farm scheme the PO and APOs had adopted a blanket approach and targeted all farmers eligible to participate in the Cotswold Hills ESA scheme, irrespective of the habitats present on their farm or their position within the local farming community. As the Cotswold Hills ESA PO explained:

' ... the first year, when the scheme was launched MAFF sent a full information pack to all known holdings over, I can't remember the exact size, but it was probably over five hectares, the very small ones weren't eligible to enter into the scheme. So, we basically contacted everyone who would be eligible to join.'

Since initially launching the ESA, the Cotswold Hills PO and APOs have gone on to actively promote the scheme to all farmers within the area. As more farmers have enrolled into the scheme the PO and APOs have, in accordance with MAFF's MOU, taken on greater responsibilities to manage individual ESA agreements. However, the PO/APOs assert that they are continuously contacting non-participants in order to persuade and encourage them to enrol into MAFF's agri-environmental objectives, as the Cotswold Hills PO went on to outline:

" ... after the scheme had been running for two years and we had a payment review and we actually produced a supplementary newsletter simply addressing the payment review and what that meant, and we try to write it in such a way that it informed the existing landholders of the changes, but tried to engender some enthusiasm in the non agreement holders and that had blanket circulation again ... this year we have decided not to send anything out and what we are doing is looking at the uptake maps and identifying the holes and then trying to ascertain who actually farms the holes and make contact with them".

Thus, with a greater number of officers implementing the Cotswold Hills ESA it is evident that a more proactive approach has been facilitated. More farmers have been contacted throughout the promotion of the scheme and subsequently the PO and APOs have had the time to frequently visit ESA agreement holders. As one farmer participating in the ESA helped to outline:

"... She [the APO] has come to see us quite regularly since we first joined. Sometimes it's because I've called her out to look at something, but often she'll just phone up and ask if she can come out and have a look and a chat, which is great, we never mind her coming".

5.7 Conclusion.

It has been argued elsewhere that the local-level implementer is a highly autonomous policy actor, whose personal decisions and actions may greatly determine the outcome of an individual policy (Prottas, 1977; Lipsky, 1980; Hudson, 1993). It is believed that policy makers are highly dependent upon the individual implementer, and will, wherever possible, seek to co-operate with the objectives of the policy implementer. The analysis here has shown, however, that the agri-environmental implementer is permitted limited autonomous decision-making powers in the implementation of individual agri-environmental schemes. In accordance with bureaucratic rules imposed by MAFF and the FRCA, the individual PO is forced to comply with an implementation process that is largely shaped and defined by their bureaucratic superiors. The POs stated that they regard themselves as servants to the agricultural ministry, and asserted that their primary objective is to implement the agri-environmental schemes on behalf of MAFF and to ensure that MAFF's objectives are enacted at the ground level.

The analysis went on to reveal, however, that the relationship between the individual PO and their bureaucratic superiors is not as subservient as outlined above. Officials within MAFF and the FRCA asserted that they trust in the professionalism of the FRCA POs/APOs and, within the boundaries of legislation, they will permit the POs a relative degree of discretionary freedom. This was primarily evident where the PO's/APO's recommendations for derogations were generally accepted by MAFF. Further, MAFF asserted that the FRCA POs/APOs will require a certain degree of autonomy in order to ensure that MAFF's own national agri-environmental objectives will be efficiently and effectively implemented on individual farm holdings. In this context, it was evident that the POs in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs were permitted the autonomy to decide upon the most appropriate implementation strategies to adopt for their individual ESA schemes. However, where the POs were permitted a relative degree of freedom from the powers of MAFF, any notion of an autonomous agri-environmental implementer was eroded as it became evident that their implementory decisions and actions were further shaped and influenced by a number of local and scheme factors, such as the size of their respective ESA scheme, the number of farmers in the schemes and local farming community dynamics. In this context, the analysis has so far shown that the agri-environmental implementer is part of an emerging agri-environmental implementation network whose actors, most notably MAFF, have considerable power and control over the role of the agri-environmental implementer (Fig. 5.5). In accordance with the actor-network

methodology, however, the analysis of the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer has merely begun. In their interviews both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs revealed that farmers are prominent actors in their agri-environmental implementation network. In seeking to analyse the complexity and power relations in the agri-environmental implementation process the following chapter seeks to examine the relationship of farmers with the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs.

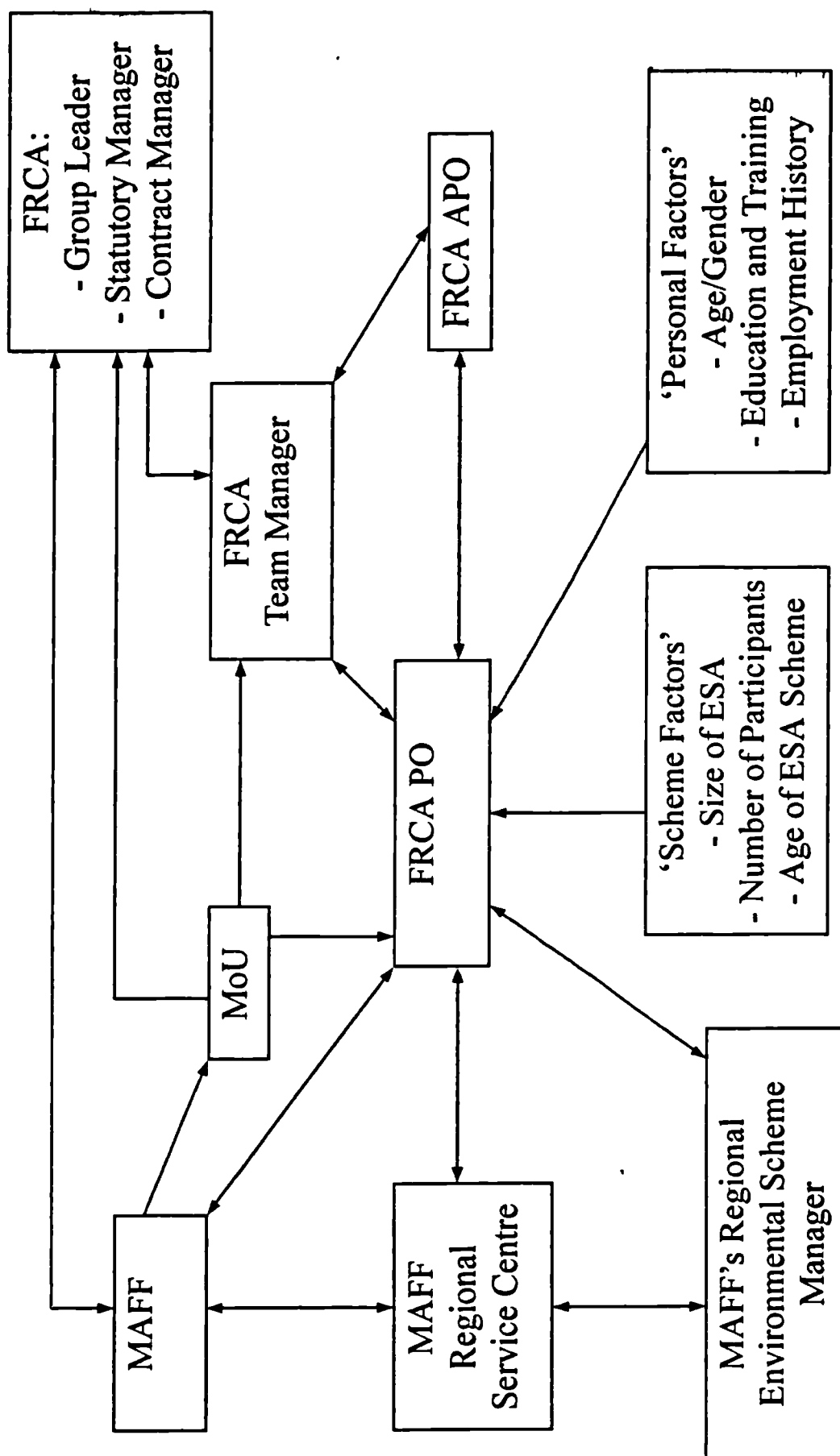


Fig. 5.5. The FRCA Project Officer's Actor-Network
(Source: Author)

Chapter 6

FRCA Project Officer-Farmer Relationship

6.1 Introduction

As chapter 3 discussed, the voluntary nature of the UK's agri-environmental schemes has meant that farmers have had to be persuaded and cajoled into agri-environmental participation. Operating at the ground level and in direct contact with the farming community, it has been the role of the FRCA POs/APOs to 'sell' the agri-environmental schemes to farming communities and to try to encourage individual farmers to implement MAFF's agri-environmental objectives. This chapter seeks to outline the relationship that the FRCA POs in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs have with farmers eligible to participate in the ESA schemes.

It is widely acknowledged that farmers are powerful autonomous decision-makers. Many farmers may wish to accept, reject or modify the POs'/APOs' arguments in accordance with their individual lifeworlds, which, as many researchers have highlighted, are comprised of a network of factors such as a farmers' age, education, and income dependency (see Brotherton, 1989, 1991; Morris and Potter, 1995; Wilson, 1996, 1997). Given the qualitative nature of this research, the analysis does not seek to re-evaluate the number of factors influencing farmers' decisions, however, the chapter will seek briefly to outline how the farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs support the findings of many research studies, by revealing that the FRCA PO/APO is not the only factor influencing farmers' decisions to participate in the ESA schemes. Following this, however, the main focus of the chapter is to analyse how the FRCA POs/APOs operate in this complex network of factors influencing farmers' decisions. In particular, attention is paid to the strategies adopted by the POs/APOs as they attempt to persuade, convince and enrol as many farmers into the ESA schemes as possible. Further, having secured the co-operation of farmers, the chapter seeks to demonstrate how the FRCA POs/APOs ensure that individual agreement holders remain faithful to MAFF's agri-environmental objectives. The second half of the chapter then turns to the attitudes of the farmers participating and not-participating in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA schemes. Particular attention is paid to their views on the role of the FRCA PO, and the ideal characteristics which farmers look for in a personal agri-environmental implementer.

6.2. Agri-Environmental Participation

As chapter 3 outlined, many agri-environmental researchers have recognised that the individual on-farm conservation advisor plays a central role in influencing farmers decisions to adopt general farm conservation practices. Westmacott and Worthington (1974) noted, for example, that an enthusiastic advisor could facilitate the development of ‘new’ agri-environmental policies, while Ward (1994:185) went so far as to argue that, for farmers situated in the Ouse catchment area of Eastern England, “the risk of taking action ... [related to pesticide applications] ... independent of ... [their] ... advisor was too great for most farmers”. Although this is less conclusive in the context of agri-environmental schemes, a few researchers have drawn tentative conclusions, where the FRCA PO is believed to be an influential actor in farmers’ decisions to participate in an agri-environmental scheme. In his study of the Cambrian Mountains ESA Wilson (1996, 1997) found, for example, that many farmers would receive and implement the advice of the ESA PO. This was further supported by Moss (1994) and Skerratt (1994). Reflecting these empirical studies, it is evident in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs that for many of those farmers interviewed, the FRCA POs/APOs occupy an influential position in their decisions to participate in the ESA schemes. The majority of the farmers surveyed spoke highly of their respective PO/APO, and some farmers argued that they would not have participated in the schemes if it had not been for the advice and encouragement disseminated by the individual POs/APOs. This was clearly expressed by two farmers participating in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs.

“ ... with what I’m doing, I just wouldn’t have bothered if I hadn’t had the time and respect for Bill Nickson [PO]” (Breckland ESA, participant).

“I am absolutely sure that we wouldn’t have been part of the scheme if it wasn’t for Mr Appleton [PO]” (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

However, it is widely acknowledged, and accepted, that farmers are powerful autonomous decision makers who may accept or reject the advice of the FRCA PO and will do so in accordance with a network of micro and macro-structural factors, which have been identified as shaping and influencing farmers’ agri-environmental decision-making practices (see section 3.4.1). Providing further empirical evidence to support the existence of this network, the farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs revealed that, while the FRCA PO was, for some, an important and influential actor, most of the participants and non-participants interviewed outlined how other factors proved to be more influential in shaping their decisions to participate in the ESA schemes. One farmer currently not participating in the Breckland ESA scheme supported Potter and Lobley’s (1992) successor factor when he outlined that, while he had received advice and encouragement from the FRCA PO, his need to secure a profitable business for his son, who was to succeed him on the farm,

proved to be more important than adhering to the POs recommendations of participating in the ESA scheme. As the farmer explained:

" .. oh yea, that chap came round from the ministry [the PO] to explain what I would have to do if I went into the scheme. You see, I was quite interested in it at first. There was so much initial publicity and I thought why not, lets see what it's all about, but when I found out what would be involved I realised that I couldn't afford to go into it as it would leave my son with too many restrictions when he takes over the farm ..." (Breckland ESA, non-participant).

Further, another non-participant in the Breckland ESA asserted that, while contact was made with the FRCA PO, the restrictions on the irrigation of land imposed under the Breckland ESA scheme (see appendix 2), forced him to reject the advice of the PO as constant irrigation is needed on his land in order to facilitate the cultivation of any arable or horticultural crop.

"Well the Brecks is extremely dry, sandy soil and my farm is on one of the sandiest parts of the area, so you see I need to irrigate it constantly and the ESA scheme wouldn't let me do that, so I had no choice really ... it was either go into the scheme and give up farming or continue to irrigate the land ... I'm a farmer that's what I do, so I choose to farm".

For most of the farmers interviewed in the two ESAs, it was revealed that the primary reasons for their adoption or non-adoption of the ESA schemes was routed in personal financial motivations. The non-participants interviewed outlined how they felt that the scheme payments were inadequate as a means of supporting their farm businesses, while many of the participants, most notably in the Cotswold Hills ESA, spoke of the financial benefits of entering into the ESA scheme especially where financial grants could be obtained for restoring dry stone walls in the Cotswolds. As these various farmers outlined:

"We never intended joining because of financial reasons surprisingly enough. The payments were not good enough. They are only 10% of what we can do economically" (Breckland ESA, non-participant).

"The PO did come round to discuss the scheme with me, but basically I haven't got enough capital to join the scheme" (Breckland ESA, non-participant).

"I did it for the money at the end of the day" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant)

"The payments per acre were obviously rather tempting, that's why we did it I suppose" (Breckland ESA, participant).

"Basically I joined because they were funding all the things that I was wanting to do and couldn't really do beforehand" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

"Well the remuneration is worthwhile against any snags" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

" ... the ESA scheme pays me according to its scheme and I sit back and watch, its better than farming" (Breckland ESA, participant).

"I make no bones about it, our biggest reason for going, or being keen about the ESA is the walls" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

"... the main reason for joining the scheme was that well, really for getting the walling grants" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

"I was a bit ashamed of the dry stone walls, so as a scheme that eventually restores them, not that they are used, but any scheme that would restore them would be great" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

In this context, it is evident that like many previous research studies, farmers' decisions to participate in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs are taken within a complex network of influencing factors. In this case study, the FRCA PO/APO was, for some farmers, an influential actor, but ultimately farmers' personal financial situations and motivations influenced their decisions to participate in the ESA schemes.

Analysing the PO postal questionnaire, it is evident that the FRCA POs/APOs are not ignorant of the fact that, for many farmers, their decisions to participate or not participate in an agri-environmental scheme will be taken in response to a network of structural and agency factors within which the POs themselves may be of little influence on farmers' agri-environmental decisions. As Table 6.1 outlines, for example, the majority of POs/APOs surveyed recognised that financial factors will be a driving force for many farmers' agri-environmental participatory decisions, while only 6 (10%) of the POs/APOs regarded themselves as influential actors in farmers' decision-making processes.

Determinants (non-exclusive categories)	N0. FRCA PO/APOs
Economics	53
How scheme fits in with farm business	27
Conservation attitude of farmer	19
Scheme flexibility	9
Relationship with PO APO	6
Successor factor	4
Perceived bureaucracy	3
Scheme duration	3
Influence of neighbouring farmers	3
Farmer's age	3
Changes in farmer's personal circumstances	3
Wider food markets	3
Previous relationship with MAFF	2
Influence of environmental groups	1
Agri-environmental eligibility	1

Table 6.1. FRCA POs'/APOs' perceptions of factors influencing farmers' agri-environmental decisions (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

In this context, it is evident that the FRCA POs/APOs are faced with a difficult task of adhering to MAFF's MoU which, as Chapter 5 outlined, insists that the FRCA PO must persuade and encourage many farmers to enrol in MAFF's agri-environmental objectives. Rather than simply promoting the agri-environmental schemes amongst the farming communities, the FRCA POs/APOs must evidently compete with the network of factors which have been identified to influence farmers' agri-environmental decisions. They must convince farmers that whatever their personal circumstances are, participating in an agri-environmental scheme will be of benefit to themselves as well as to the countryside. In a review of the UK's ESA schemes, Jenkins (1990:30) argued that "the marketing of an ESA scheme and the 'image created for it among farmers is important if farmers' innate conservatism and unwillingness to be subject to outside restrictions on their farming activities are to be overcome". The agri-environmental schemes must be marketed, they must be sold to the farming community as a worthwhile investment. According to the South Wessex Downs ESA PO, this marketing strategy has become a central feature of the POs' role as an agri-environmental implementer. He asserts that:

" ... obviously farmers will react to a number of personal factors before deciding to participate in an agri-environmental scheme. Naturally I respect the decisions made by farmers, but I still have to work against this background of determinants in order to encourage farmers to join in the scheme. Basically, I've got to sell the scheme to the farmers. I've got to try and convince them that they would benefit by joining the scheme".

But how does the individual FRCA PO/APO do this? How do they attempt to market the scheme and persuade farmers to enrol into agri-environmental management agreements?

6.3. Enrolling Farmers into Individual Management Agreements.

As chapter 5 outlined, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs were forced, in the light of local circumstances, to adopt different implementation strategies when initially launching their respective ESA schemes. Given limited temporal resources, it was evident that the Breckland ESA PO adopted a progressive farmer strategy and sought to initially market the ESA scheme to specific farmers in the area, while the Cotswold Hills ESA PO and APOs were able to adopt a more proactive approach and target all farmers in the ESA (see section 5.6). Despite adopting different promotional strategies, however, it is evident that both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs have placed considerable emphasis on conducting individual farm visits as a primary tool in which to persuade and enrol farmers into individual management agreements. The Cotswold Hills ESA PO outlined that whenever a farmer wishes to join the ESA scheme, or simply requests information concerning the ESA, he will go out and visit the individual farmer on his or her own farm before the individual agreement is drawn up and

signed by all interested parties, notably MAFF and the farmer. According to the Cotswold Hills ESA PO, an agri-environmental agreement is rarely drawn up and signed without a prior visit from either himself or one of his five APOs.

"There are actually very, very few applications that come in out of the blue. Hardly any ... we have nearly always been before the application comes in" (Appleton, 1997).

According to agricultural extension scientists, the individual farm visit is one of the most appropriate and effective methodologies to use in the dissemination of 'new' advice and information (Singh, 1981; Benor et al., 1984; Roling, 1988). On-farm visits give the advisor the opportunity to view the individual farm holding and to assess how a policy or technology may be integrated within the farmers' personal farm plan. Further, van den Ban and Hawkins (1988) assert that individual farm visits enable the farmer to express their personal concerns or objectives more easily within a non-threatening and familiar environment. As Chapter 5 discussed, the generality of the agri-environmental schemes can not account for the distinctiveness of the individual farm holding, but by visiting the farmers and observing the individual farm businesses and ecosystems the Cotswold Hills ESA PO believes that he can advise and assist the farmers to implement MAFF's agri-environmental objectives in relation to their individual farm business plans. As the PO explained:

"Well I think that with something like this [the ESA] it is not simply a sort of take it or leave it thing. It has to be built around their farm business. They [the farmers] are committing themselves for quite a long time. There are significant restrictions on what they do ... but we can usually build an agreement around an existing farm system, but the restrictions are there".

Many of the participants interviewed outlined how they considered these farm visits to be extremely useful during the initial stages of deciding to participate in the ESA schemes. One farmer currently participating in the Breckland ESA argued that:

"... initially I was a bit unsure about the ESA. When it first came out there was loads of publicity. MAFF sent me an information pack, but I didn't know how it could apply to my farm. So I called out the scheme manager bloke and it was really useful as he walked around the farm with me and we discussed how I could join the scheme and what I should do with it ...".

During these initial farm visits, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs went on to outline that the level of advice given to the farmers can vary from one individual to another, depending upon the farmers' own knowledge, experience and expertise with agri-environmental conservation. Often the POs/APOs will just have to visit the farmers in order to discuss and approve their ESA plans. A number of the farmers interviewed within the two ESAs outlined, for example, that when they first decided to enter into their respective ESA scheme, they already knew which tiers to enter specific areas of their farm land under and simply sought the

POs'/APOs' reassurance that their plans would be applicable under MAFF legislation. As the farmers explained:

"I decided which areas to go in, the project officer didn't tell me. One just picked a tier and an area" (Breckland ESA, participant).

"I just told him what I wanted to do under the scheme and he said fine" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

However, with the majority of farmers in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, the POs outlined that many farmers require more detailed advice on general conservation issues and, in particular, how they might implement the different ESA tiers on their individual farm holdings. The Breckland ESA PO explained that:

"... on the whole I have to go to the farmers and give them a lot of advice and help on what the ESA scheme is trying to achieve and how they may help to contribute to the schemes' objectives by entering relevant parts of their land into the specific ESA tiers. ... I mean, most farmers have read through the information booklet that was sent to them at the launch of the scheme, but they still need a lot of guidance as to how they can apply the requirements of the scheme on their own farm ...".

This was further supported by a number of those farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs who spoke of the level of detail that they received from their respective PO/APOs when they were first considering to join the ESA schemes.

"I do remember, I did have the four categories explained to me in detail and I was able to say no to three of them there and then" (Breckland ESA, participant).

"I got one of them [the PO APOs] to come out and we went round the farm looking at the walls, and I wanted to know more about it, what was the sort of tiers to put things in. So they drew up a plan and suggested the tiers that I should go into which seemed sensible" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

"... the people [PO APOs] came round. You rang them up and said 'look, I'm interested in this scheme' and they came round and talked to you ... they came out and discussed the restrictions and the benefits and then suggested what we could do" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

However, while the initial farm visits provide a medium through which the FRCA POs/APOs may advise and enrol farmers into the individual ESA schemes, a question often raised by agri-environmental researchers is to what extent do farmers listen to and take on board the advice of conservation advisors? In the context of this research, do farmers adhere to the advice which the FRCA PO provides during the farm visits or, as autonomous decision-makers, do they attempt to follow their own agri-environmental objectives when participating in an agri-environmental scheme?

As Chapter 3 outlined, a number of researchers have expressed scepticism as to the level of conservation advice which is actually implemented by farmers in the locality (Carr, 1988; Lowe et al., 1990). In the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, however, little evidence suggests that the farmers interviewed attempted to defy the advice and recommendations that the POs provided through their initial farm visits. All of the farmers outlined the tiers that were recommended by the FRCA PO, and these were subsequently verified against the farmers' individual ESA management agreements which were made available for observation during many of the farmer interviews. In this context, it was evident that the FRCA POs/APOs had succeeded in persuading farmers to adhere to their initial suggestions of how the farmers may implement the ESA schemes on their individual farm holdings. But how did the POs achieve this?

6.4. Gaining Farmers Trust and Co-Operation.

Recognising that farmers are autonomous decision-makers, agricultural extension scientists argue that agricultural advisors and implementers have had to gain the co-operation and trust of the individual farmer in order that they may have some influence over farmers' decisions and actions. According to van den Ban and Hawkins (1988), it is only when the extension agent has gained the trust and respect of the farmers that they may influence the strategic decisions of the individual farmer. This has been further supported by Eldon (1988) who argues, in his study of farm conservation advisors, that the adoption and implementation of agri-environmental advice is dependent upon the level of trust between farmers and conservation advisors. Likewise, Revill and Seymour (1996) found that 'Bob', their Pollution Inspector, regarded a trusting relationship between himself and farmers as his main instrument for improving water quality.

Emulating these research studies, it is evident from the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs that, as the issue of trust emerged as a central feature of the relationship between MAFF and the FRCA PO/APO (see section 5.5), the relationship that exists between the POs and farmers in the two ESAs is primarily based upon mutual trust and respect. In their interviews, both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs spoke of the importance of establishing a strong and trusting relationship with farmers in order to facilitate the implementation of their respective agri-environmental schemes. The Breckland ESA PO noted, for example, that:

"... farmers are naturally sceptical individuals. You don't want to go in there like a 'bull in a china shop', selling the scheme hard. As a project officer you need to build up a good rapport with the farmer. You need to try and gain their trust in you, otherwise you aren't going to get anywhere".

Concomitantly, one farmer within the Cotswold Hills ESA explained that his relationship with his APO, is “a bit like your vet or your machinery supplier you use 90 per cent of the time. You know, you get quotes from others, but you build up a working relationship with these people, you trust them and you welcome their ideas and suggestions”.

According to the Breckland ESA PO, such a working relationship can take many years to build and establish.

“I think anybody going into an area cold, it takes quite a long time to just build up contacts and liaison ... you are talking about a couple of years at least to get properly established”.

Indeed, when asked if it took the POs/APOs a long time (i.e. over a year) to build up a rapport with the farmers located in their area of work, 37 per cent of the POs/APOs surveyed through the postal questionnaire revealed that often it can take many years to gain the trust of the farming community. One PO implementing the Pennine Dales ESA outlined, for example, that:

“... it took about three years to build up a rapport with the farmers. It's understandable as farmers are often wary of people coming on to their farms ...”.

Establishing Trust

In seeking to gain the trust and co-operation of the farmers eligible to participate in the ESA schemes, it was evident that both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs sought to adopt a conciliatory approach when attempting to enrol farmers into individual management agreements. According to the Breckland ESA PO, whenever he first visits a potential participant he will not seek to dictate to the farmer which land or ESA tiers he/she should enter into the scheme. Instead, he will firstly seek to listen to the interests and objectives of the individual farmer. He will attempt to understand the vision that the farmer has of his individual farm. Having maintained this initial silent and objective role, the Breckland ESA PO insists that he will then seek to discuss, advise and suggest how the agreement holder may implement the scheme in relation to their individual farm plans. As the Breckland ESA PO explained:

“I talk through the requirements of the scheme and the management implications with the farmer. ... I think that if you persuade somebody against their will and then they find in a couple of years down the line that its really causing a lot of management difficulties, then I would rather avoid that from the outset, so I do try to talk through the management implications and to get them to be happy with it so that it fits in well with the farming system”.

This was further supported by one of the farmers interviewed within the Breckland ESA who explained that, when he first decided to join the scheme:

"he [the PO] came out and we sort of looked at the maps ... and then we sat down to discuss which tiers we would enter and why we thought that they [conservation headlands] would be more suitable for the farm" (emphasis added).

In this context, the individual farmer is afforded some degree of autonomy in deciding how to implement their individual management agreement. Participating in the schemes, farmers are bound by MAFF's rules and regulations, but the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs seek to maintain a non-dictatorial role and, instead, discuss farmers' own ideas as to how MAFF's objectives can be integrated with their current farming system. In doing so, the FRCA PO/APO has succeeded in gaining the trust and co-operation of many of the farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. They recognise that the POs listen to their concerns and objectives and will, where possible, seek to help them to implement these when participating in the ESA schemes. Two farmers participating in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs explained:

"yea, he's [PO] good. When he visits the farm he'll always chat about general issues and always seems ready to listen to what I've got to say, which is amazing for a civil servant, usually they haven't got a clue how to communicate with real people!" (Breckland ESA, participant).

"Richard [PO] came round at the beginning and just went over the scheme with me. I found that I was able to tell him exactly what I wanted to do ... there seemed to be no problems with it. He told me that, that would be fine - to be honest I was a bit shocked, at first I was a bit reluctant about going in for any scheme as I always thought that it'd stop me from farming the way I want to, but so far I've had no problems ..." (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant)

Interestingly, two of the non-participants in the Cotswold Hills ESA also spoke of their respect for the PO and APOs. They asserted that, while personal financial circumstances prevented them from participating in the schemes, they respected the fact that when the FRCA PO visited their farm to try and encourage them to join the scheme the PO did not attempt to force or pressurise them to participate. They outlined that, instead, the PO took the time to listen to their problems and evidently understood why, at that time, they could not afford to participate in the scheme. One of the farmers interviewed went on to outline, however, that since the PO visited him to promote the scheme, his circumstances have changed and he is currently considering contacting the FRCA PO to request another visit to discuss how he may participate in the ESA.

In this context, therefore, it is evident that by maintaining a non-dictatorial role and seeking to understand farmers individual objectives the FRCA POs/APOs may gain the trust and co-operation of both existing and future agri-environmental participants. Supporting these findings, Lowe et al. (1997) have recently found in relation to their study of farm pollution regulation, that advisors will seek to enter into the world of the individual farmer. They will attempt to understand farmers' personal interests and objectives so that they may work with

the farmers, assisting them to implement their objectives within the confines of regulatory boundaries. As Lowe et al. (1997:207) observed:

“ ... to satisfy individual farmers it was important that the advice was tailored to their specific circumstances and concerns ... ADAS advisors saw themselves as serving the farmers' interest ... In seeing farmers first, as 'our clients', ADAS staff assigned certain interests to them. In particular, the farmer's commercial interest were viewed as predominant for example, in assessing what the farmer 'can realistically do'”.

By entering the world of the individual farmer and legitimising their interests in the official policy process, Lowe et al. (1997) conclude that the advisors were able to gain the trust and co-operation of many farmers as they became increasingly dependent on the advisors as a means through which their personal interests could be implemented in the regulatory framework of farm pollution.

Application Forms

Drawing upon the postal questionnaire and the interviews conducted in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, it is evident that the FRCA POs/APOs will attempt to adopt additional methods in which to build and maintain farmers trust and co-operation. In particular, it is evident that some FRCA POs/APOs will seek to assist farmers by filling out scheme application forms on behalf of the farmers (Table 6.2).

	No. FRCA PO/APO
Farmer fills out application form	37
PO/APO fills out application form	14
Environmental advisor fills out application form	6
No answer	3
TOTAL	60

Table 6.2. Number of FRCA POs/APOs filling out agri-environmental agreement application forms (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

Currently, there is no specific requirement under MAFF's MoU that the FRCA PO APOs should fill out the application forms on behalf of a prospective agreement holder, but, according to the Cotswold Hills ESA PO, bureaucratic forms can often act as a deterrent for many farmers when they are considering participation in any new voluntary scheme. Thus, by assisting farmers to fill out their application forms, the Cotswold Hills ESA PO believes that they can attempt to break down any bureaucratic barriers in order for the ESA scheme to be as user friendly as possible. As the Cotswold Hills ESA PO and APO outlined:

“I don't know, there is a barrier with forms so what we actually do is say 'well look there is the first page of the form, put your holding number there, you name in there,

your address in there and you are an owner occupier so put that in there'. So you sort of talk them through it" (Cotswold Hills ESA project officer).

"We do have to be a bit careful, but I do a lot more than perhaps I should. Yea, we try to help them with that and then once we do the application form, it's not too hard for them" (Cotswold Hills ESA assistant project officer).

It was evident from the farmer interviews conducted in the Cotswold Hills ESA, that a number of the farmers participating in the scheme greatly appreciated the assistance that the PO and APOs could provide in respect to scheme applications. Many of the farmers interviewed spoke of the relative ease of implementing the ESA scheme and, as one farmer outlined, this was due in part, to the assistance provided by the FRCA PO when filling out the ESA application forms.

"It was just a case of crossing t's and dotting i's and I've always thought that the ESA out of all the schemes has been the most straightforward and best scheme to work with and it is important that you have an individual project officer that you can liaise with".

6.5 Securing Farmers Trust and Co-Operation

Having enrolled farmers into individual agri-environmental management agreements the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs revealed that under MAFF's MoU they are expected to continue to visit and advise participants on the implementation of their individual agri-environmental agreement. As Chapter 5 discussed, this may include the recommendation of derogations or the provision of advice whenever a farmer wishes to amend the specificity's of their individual agreement. Moreover, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs argued that they must continue to visit participating farmers in order to secure their co-operation and alliance to MAFF's agri-environmental requirements. "Basically, we've got to make sure that the farmers stick with the scheme. There is a five year opt out clause when a farmer can pull out of their agreement with MAFF, but obviously once we've got them into the scheme we want to keep them there" (Nickson, 1997).

According to both the ESA POs, they will attempt, where possible, to visit existing agreement holders to informally discuss with the farmers how they are getting on with implementing the ESA scheme. The Breckland ESA PO notes that, due to limited temporal resources, the number of visits he makes is rather limited, but he insists that " I do try and keep in touch with existing agreement holders. It is very important to keep an eye on them, just to be there if they need help". As Chapter 5 discussed, the Cotswold Hills ESA PO is, on the other hand, able to utilise the resources of his APOs and thus conduct many more visits to participating farmers. According to one of the Cotswold Hills ESA APOs, there will be no fixed period in which they will visit agreement holders. Naturally, the farmers may contact them for

information or advice concerning a derogation at any time of the year and, likewise, the APO asserts that they may call upon a farmer wherever they have time. As one farmer interviewed in the Cotswold Hills ESA supported:

“My ESA period with regard to discussing work plans and things tends to happen from the autumn through to say March, so I know in a period of no project work I actually have no course to meet [with the APO], although having said that she [APO] did ring to say that she was going to call in when she was passing one day, just for a chat and that's always welcomed”.

During such farm visits, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs assert that the farmers are given an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns vis-a-vis the scheme rules, its applicability at the farm level and whether any improvements could be made to the scheme prescriptions. “We try to maintain our objective view during the visits. We listen to the farmers and often they will just tell us what they think of the scheme, you know, whether its working for them or some farmers have suggested ways in which they think the scheme could be improved” (Appleton, 1997). The Cotswold Hills ESA PO went on to discuss one particular ESA participant who was considered by MAFF and the local farming community to be something of a leading light in the area concerning agri-environmental conservation. The Cotswold Hills ESA PO outlined that during a number of farm visits the farmer had suggested to him that the introduction of a field margin tier in the Cotswold Hills ESA scheme would be beneficial. “Whenever I’d see him, he’d mention the need for field margins. He had a strong argument though, and in fact we are going to put forward that suggestion to the Ministry when the scheme is reviewed in ‘98/’99” (Appleton, 1997). Indeed, in an independent interview with the same farmer he reiterated the need for conservation headlands in the ESA scheme, but perhaps more importantly, he outlined how the individual farm visits provided him with a means through which his opinions could be heard by the FRCA PO APO. He argued that:

“... the thing that saddens me currently about the ESA is that there is no arable field margins prescriptions. I am very strong in my views about that, because we implemented field margins back in ‘92 ‘93 and they have been a tremendous success. Lots of farmers show interest in them, but its quite a turn off when there is no support mechanism or scheme I’ve spoke to Richard Appleton [the PO] about it. He came to visits me a short while ago and that actually took up most of the visit. ... He assures me that he will put it forward to the Ministry when the scheme comes up for review next, which would be great ... as with so many arable farms in the area, the best thing that they can do is to develop field margins”.

As Chapter 3 discussed, MAFF’s (House of Commons, 1996) Rural White Paper has set provisions to promote effective consultation on agri-environmental schemes at both national and local levels (see section 3.4.2). The annual regional liaison meetings, for example, were introduced to give agreement holders the opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of their respective agri-environmental scheme with MAFF and various local environmental organisations. However, according to one of the farmers interviewed in the Breckland ESA,

the annual liaison meetings do not enable all of the voices to be heard within the local farming community.

"It's the same with most things. You only ever get the larger, more vocal farmers at these sorts of meetings. They will always speak up while others will just sit quietly in a corner, or not turn up at all".

Moreover, another farmer participating in the Breckland ESA outlined that, "often these meetings are so structured and formal. You know, we've all got to stick to a framework of what is to be discussed and usually there isn't enough time to be able to say what we really want to".

This has been supported by agricultural extension scientists who critique the use of group meetings as a means of disseminating advice and information. Giles (1983) notes that, on occasion, the extension agent may learn a great deal from farmers attending group meetings. "By listening to and talking to those in the industry who accept the risks and take the decisions", the extension agents may enrich their personal experience and knowledge systems (Giles, 1983:324). However, Giles (1983) goes on to outline how smaller farmers may be disproportionately represented at such meetings. This was further argued by Davies (1988) who noted that often only the larger more dominant farmers in a district will attend group meetings and, even then, only a small number of farmers may actually contribute to the discussions. In this context, it was asserted by many of the farmers participating in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA that the individual farm visits provide them with a greater opportunity to voice their concerns to ministerial officials via the FRCA PO/APO. One farmer interviewed within the Cotswold Hills ESA outlined that:

"It's always much easier when he [PO] comes out to the farm. We can walk around and actually see what needs to be done and I can ask specific questions or often I'll chat to him about how the scheme could be improved, especially with the introduction of field margins".

Further, the individual farm visit provides a medium through which the FRCA PO/APO may facilitate a bottom-up approach to agri-environmental policy. Under MAFF's MoU the FRCA POs/APOs are required to report back to MAFF on how well their schemes are being implemented at the ground level. The Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs/APOs assert that they do take account of farmers opinions and transfer these to the policy makers within MAFF. The Breckland ESA PO argued, for example, that:

"... obviously, farmers are able to voice their opinions at the review meetings, but we also take on board what they say and feed that into the policy process".

Further, the Cotswold Hills ESA PO insists that, as a link between the farmers and the policy makers within MAFF, he will “always pass on what the farmers say ... often this is done during informal discussions that I have with the people in the RSC, but I have also got to write an official report to MAFF when the scheme is reviewed, and it is in such a report that I’ll pass on the farmers suggestions for the introduction of those conservation headlands”. The degree to which policy makers listen to, and enact farmers’ opinions is debatable, however. The FRCA PO/APO may pass on information, on behalf of the farmers, but the head of MAFF’s Conservation Policy Division insists that:

“... farmers are less vigorous in influencing us ... we are very ready in principle to improve the schemes [but] we don’t agree with everything that’s put to us”.

In summary, the FRCA POs/APOs have been faced with a difficult task of enrolling farmers into individual agri-environmental agreements, and, further, securing their co-operation and alliance to MAFF’s agri-environmental objectives. Operating within a network of influencing factors, the FRCA POs/APOs in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs have sought to gain the co-operation of farmers by adopting a non-dictatory role. Utilising farm visits as an effective tool to gain access to participants and non-participants the FRCA POs/APOs have visited farmers throughout the duration of their individual management agreements, whereupon they have attempted to take on board farmers’ interests and opinions and in turn feed these into the policy implementation process.

Throughout this chapter, the analysis has so far advocated a one way relationship between the farmers and FRCA POs APOs. The POs/APOs have had to gain the trust and co-operation of the powerful autonomous farming community, and have attempted to do this by adopting a non-dictatorial role throughout the duration of the farmers’ individual agri-environmental agreements. However, it is evident that as the POs/APOs listen to the farmers and seek to transfer their concerns and opinions back to MAFF, the POs/APOs are empowering themselves as important and influential actors in the world of the agri-environmental participant. They are the gatekeeper through which farmers’ objectives and interests may be implemented within the official agri-environmental policy process. Moreover, it is evident that it has been the individual PO APO who has effectively brought together the different worlds of MAFF and the individual farmer under the same umbrella of the ESA schemes. Where Callon (1986) and Latour (1987) assert that actors will only become enrolled into a network when all actors align themselves to the same objectives, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs have evidently situated themselves at the interface of two different actor-networks, whereupon, they have assisted both actors to implement their individual objectives within the wider agri-environmental implementation process (Fig. 6.1) (see Chapter 9 for further discussion). Expanding upon this argument, the following section will continue to draw upon the interviews conducted with farmers both participating and not-participating in the Breckland and Cotswold

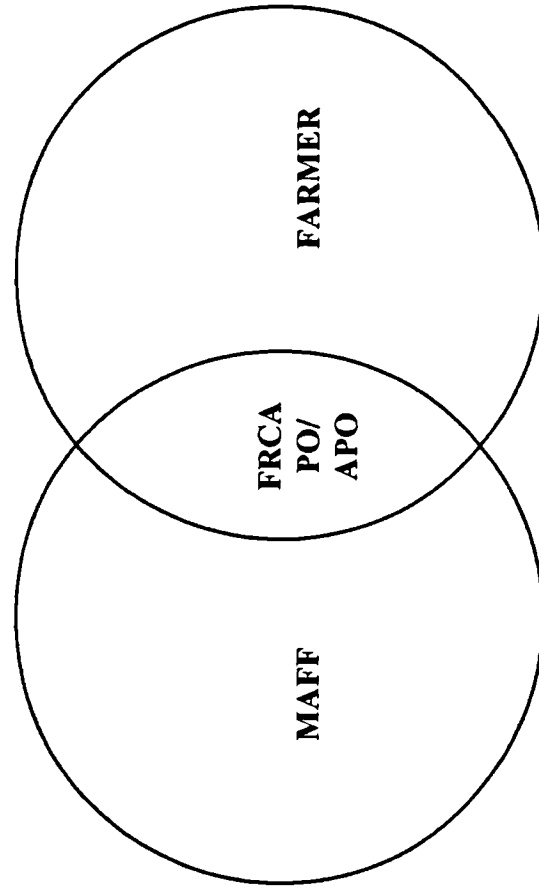


Fig. 6.1. The FRCA PO/APO at the interface of MAFF's and the farmer's individual agri-environmental networks (Source: author)

Hills ESAs, in order to outline how the farmers regard the FRCA POs/APOs as important actors in their agri-environmental implementation network - a position of importance and influence which has been furthered by the agricultural background and characteristics of the individual PO/APO.

6.6 Farmers' Attitudes Towards the FRCA Project Officer

The majority of farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs appeared to greatly appreciate the help and advice given to them by the FRCA POs/APOs when implementing their individual ESA agreements. They spoke of the need for individuals such as the POs to be located at the ground level, to help farmers make sense of government schemes, and, to advise them on how best to implement MAFF's rules in relation to their own farm business objectives. Four agreement holders within the Breckland ESA explained, for example, that:

"... once you take it beyond the local level it becomes too much of a headless monster. You know, you've got Whitehall and Brussels. But ... you need people like Bill [the PO] to actually be able to be there and shed some sense into it"

"They [the POs] are very important. They've got to have someone like that on the ground who understands our way of thinking as well as the ministry and what they want".

"There's a need for project officers working at the ground, acting as trouble shooters for the scheme".

"Project officers provide an important interface between the ministry and the farmers. Their presence reduces the impersonality of the schemes".

Even many of the non-participants interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs expressed their opinions that there is a need for a PO to operate at the ground level environment, to act as a link to government officials and to assist farmers to adjust to 'new' political objectives. As one non-participant in the Cotswold Hills ESA argued:

"obviously I'm not in the scheme, but I have met the bloke who runs it around here and he was great. He explained the scheme to me, but it just wasn't for me but I do think that the scheme needs somebody like him, just to explain it to us in laymen's terms really".

However, while the farmers expounded upon the importance of a PO within the implementation of the UK's agri-environmental schemes, many of the farmers interviewed went on to assert that it is essential that the POs employed to advise farmers and to implement the schemes possess knowledge and experience of general agricultural issues. As four farmers participating in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs explained:

"It is very important in my mind that the project officer comes from an agricultural background otherwise it is definitely going to be a no, no, because the last thing you want is people who are ignorant of farming practices, and I believe that this is one reason why the Cotswold Hills ESA has been so successful, because Richard Appleton I mean, he came from a fairly strong agricultural background ... and I think that farmers set up a good rapport with him which means that they will work better than if say we were dealing with someone who could not answer all the questions about the scheme ..." (Cotswold Hills ESA participant).

"They [FRCA and MAFF] have had the history with implementing government policy and with contact with the farming community ... they know that farmers have a business to run and that conservation must be integrated with this" (Breckland ESA participant).

"... he's [PO] got a very good grasp of farming. Yes, I think you could easily get into a lot of trouble if you had someone who had no concept of farming, but no he is very good" (Cotswold Hills ESA, participant).

"... as far as I'm concerned there is only one organisation I deal with - MAFF. That's what I'm used to. I trust their project officers, put it like that. They've got the agricultural background. I don't know what other people are after" (Breckland ESA, participant).

This was further supported by the farmers when it was suggested that environmental groups may wish to implement the agri-environmental schemes on behalf of MAFF. The majority of the participants and non-participants interviewed expressed their fears of such a situation arising and asserted that local environmental groups should remain peripheral to the agri-environmental implementation process. As the following quotes from a number of the farmers interviewed highlight:

"I wouldn't want some long tailed twit in sandals telling me what I should do. They are busy bodies who don't listen to the full facts" (Breckland ESA participant).

"The main problem with all these organisations is that they are so ill informed on farming matters. They think that by knowing 20% they are able to inform people who live on the land, how to manage it ... no way, I wouldn't want them getting involved" (Breckland ESA participant).

"I'm extremely nervous about wildlife groups getting involved, very very nervous. I think its really bad news" (Cotswold Hills ESA participant).

"I don't think we want to get outside bodies really telling us what to do. I would fight against that." (Cotswold Hills ESA participant).

"They [wildlife groups] would want to get involved, but I mean once that happens I'm sure that people farming would pull out of it pretty quick" (Cotswold Hills ESA participant).

As Chapter 5 outlined, the majority of the FRCA POs/APOs have a strong background in agricultural related issues. Many of the POs/APOs possess a degree or diploma in an agricultural related issue and have received formal training in farm business management. Concomitantly, many have been employed within ADAS for a number of years during which

time they have built up a knowledge and experience of communicating and working with farmers (see section 5.2). According to the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs, this background in agriculture has greatly facilitated their work in implementing the ESA schemes. They believe that it has enabled them to develop a strong rapport with the farmers/landowners, gaining their trust and co-operation when implementing the individual ESA agreements. As the Cotswold Hills ESA PO outlined:

"... it has helped, having an agricultural background as it means that you can go onto a farm and, well basically, help the farmers understand the scheme in relation to their farming system. I mean, you've got to be able to talk to the farmers in a way that they can understand and relate to you, otherwise its going to be no good".

This was further supported by Lowe et al. (1997) who found that when their farm pollution advisors sought to gain the co-operation and trust of the farming community, their efforts were facilitated by the fact that several of the advisors possessed strong agricultural connections and training.

However, while the agricultural background of many of the FRCA PO APOs is favoured by the Breckland and Cotswold Hills' farming communities, Davies (1988:159) argues that, "in addition to having good scientific and technical knowledge, advisors must have the ability to communicate effectively with people". Indeed, a number of researchers have argued that the advice given by agricultural advisors can not be divorced from the individuals involved, their personalities, approaches and the way in which advice is communicated. Lowe et al. (1997) found, for example, that in their study of farm pollution regulation, the manners and approaches adopted by the pollution inspectors influenced farmers' perceptions of the advice disseminated by the inspectors. One farmer interviewed within Devon outlined that:

"There is one bloke, you couldn't meet a nicer bloke. He advises you and is helpful in any way he can be ... He's somebody you could take to straight away ... But the other bloke is a right one ... He was ignorant beyond words and very unhelpful ... They've all got a job to do, I suppose, but if they could just be nice about it. It makes a lot of difference" (in Lowe et al., 1997:139).

Lowe et al. (1997:139) went on to conclude that "the farmers preferred a co-operative and understanding relationship with NRA officials and were put out by what they regarded as officiousness ... they found it demeaning to be treated brusquely. At such times NRA staff were seen as unyielding and punitive officialdom". Within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs a couple of the farmers interviewed criticised their respective POs in terms of their approach and attitudes which the farmers felt to be unnecessarily brusque and bureaucratic. One farmer interviewed within the Breckland ESA described the PO as "quite an efficient little man ...", but went on to argue that:

"... when he came out to see me he wasn't exactly enthusiastic about the scheme or what I wanted to do on the farm. In fact it was as though he couldn't give a monkey's".

Likewise, one Cotswold Hills ESA participant believed that 'his' FRCA PO made no effort to listen to his objectives and to help him implement these within the scheme.

"Have you ever had any dealings with these government officers? In certain directions they are very good, but in other directions they are just appalling ... on the one hand I think that they do understand our situation, but sometimes it certainly doesn't seem that way. Often they can be really off hand".

However, in general these were two isolated opinions amongst the farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. Many of the farmers recognised that often the PO/APOs are placed under pressure in terms of financial and temporal constraints and that, as a result, they may sometimes appear unyielding and brusque, but the majority of the farmers spoke highly of the individual PO/APOs. They outlined that they are approachable individuals, always willing to listen to the farmers' ideas and to converse with them often as friends, rather than faces of officialdom. Indeed, the term 'good chap' was often voiced by many of the farmers describing their PO/APO and one farmer participating in the Cotswold Hills ESA described his PO as "a sort of chum". Any criticism voiced by the farmers was primarily directed at the bureaucracy of MAFF, rather than the individual FRCA PO/APO. As one farmer not participating in the Breckland ESA helped to illustrate:

"I'm afraid I have a hatred of all government bodies and civil servants, whether its the project officer or not. These schemes are just too bureaucratic and basically I can't be bothered with it all".

6.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, it is evident that the FRCA POs APOs in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs have emerged as relatively important actors in the agri-environmental decision-making nexus of the individual participant and non-participant. It is widely recognised amongst the FRCA POs/APOs that in seeking to enrol farmers into agri-environmental schemes they are competing against a number of structural and agency factors who have been shown to influence farmers' agri-environmental decisions (see Chapter 3). In doing so, the FRCA POs/APOs in the two case study ESAs evidently sought to gain the co-operation and trust of the farmers by working with them to implement their own objectives within MAFF's agri-environmental network. The POs recognised that any attempt to adopt an official approach to policy implementation would be met with extreme resistance from the farmers. Thus, adopting a 'friendly face' of officialdom, they sought to listen to the farmers' views and to assist them to implement these within MAFF's legislative boundaries. By

legitimising the individual objectives of farmers the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs/APOs have effectively reinforced the notion of farmers as powerful autonomous actors in the agri-environmental policy process.

However, while the POs/APOs evidently assist in empowering the individual farmer as a key agri-environmental decision-maker, the analysis went on to reveal that in legitimising farmers personal agri-environmental objectives the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs have established themselves as important and influential actors in farmers' individual agri-environmental implementation networks. Acting as a gatekeeper of information between the world of the farmer and MAFF, it is the FRCA PO/APO who farmers look towards to transfer their ideas and suggestions into the official implementation process. Further, it is the FRCA PO/APO who assists the farmers to make sense of MAFF's rules and regulations and to advise them on how their objectives may be implemented at the ground level.

In this context, the analysis has shown that the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs have effectively brought two different actor-networks together within the wider agri-environmental implementation process. As Chapter 5 revealed, the FRCA PO/APO is part of MAFF's powerful bureaucratic actor-network. The POs operate on behalf of MAFF and seek to implement MAFF's objectives in the locality. However, as has been revealed here, the FRCA PO/APO is also enrolled in the autonomous decision-making networks of individual farmers where they assist farmers to implement their personal objectives within the confines of wider legislative boundaries. Thus, in effect the POs act as primary facilitator to the individual agri-environmental objectives of MAFF and many farmers.

Although farmers evidently occupy a central position within the actor-network of the FRCA PO, Chapter 3 outlined how a number of 'new' actors may be enrolled into the agri-environmental implementation process. Existing research studies have highlighted that many of these 'new' environmental actors have gained increasing support from farmers who often prefer to seek and receive advice from groups, such as FWAG, rather than from the state agricultural advisor. In this context, it was argued that to fully understand the level of power and influence that the FRCA PO exerts in the agri-environmental implementation process, their relations with these new actors should be analysed. Drawing upon the research's empirical data, such an analysis is conducted in the following chapter.

Chapter 7

Relationship of FRCA Project Officer with 'New' Agri-Environmental Actors

7.1 Introduction

As Chapter 3 discussed, it is widely acknowledged amongst researchers that as agri-environmental concerns and policies have evolved in recent years the traditional elitism of the agricultural policy community has declined as new pressure groups enter the sphere of agricultural decision-making at both national and local levels. Paying particular attention to the involvement of 'interest groups'¹⁰ at the local-level, Chapter 3 went on to outline that a number of on-farm conservation advisors have emerged within the locality, providing general conservation advice to farming communities, and, in some cases, eroding the monopolistic control that the state advisory service has traditionally enjoyed. It was noted, however, that while a plethora of empirical evidence supports the emergence and influence of these 'new' environmental advisors in the British countryside, little is known of their direct involvement and influence in the implementation of individual agri-environmental schemes. Addressing this research gap, this chapter seeks to analyse the extent to which these 'new' agri-environmental actors are involved in the implementation of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs.

First, the chapter will examine the nature of the groups that are involved in the two case study ESA schemes. Following this, analysis will focus on the extent to which these local interest groups have been internalised in the agri-environmental policy process. In particular, their involvement in the formulation of policy at the local-level will be examined, before analysis turns to examine the level of involvement and influence that the interest groups have in the implementation of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs.

7.2 Nature of Interest Groups

According to the FRCA POs/APOs surveyed through the postal questionnaire, a plethora of 'interest groups' are involved in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes at the

¹⁰The use of the term 'interest groups' throughout this thesis relates to any public, private or voluntary organisation that possesses a keen interest in the local rural environment, and, is actively involved in promoting the conservation and sustainability of specific local habitats, species and the wider countryside.

regional and local level. Among the groups identified by the POs/APOs, English Nature, County Archaeologists, the NFU, FWAG and County Wildlife Trusts are believed to be actively involved with all agri-environmental schemes implemented in the UK (Table 7.1).

Interest Group	No. FRCA POs/APOs	% FRCA POs/APOs
English Nature	53	88
County Archaeologists	50	83
NFU	48	80
FWAG	47	78
County Wildlife Trusts	46	77
CLA	43	72
RSPB	42	70
Environment Agency	41	68
Countryside Commission	40	67
County Councils	40	67
National Trust	40	67
District Councils	39	65
English Heritage	37	62
Forestry Authority	37	62
National Parks Authority	21	35
Parish Councils	21	35
Ramblers Association	16	27
Commoners' Association	16	27
Ministry of Defence	11	18
CPRE	10	17
Countryside Management Group	9	15
Moorland Group	3	5

Table 7.1. Interest groups FRCA POs/APOs are in contact with during the implementation of agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

Analysing the involvement of the interest groups on an individual scheme basis, however, it is evident that while some similarities exist between the national schemes, the composition of local interest networks will vary widely from one agri-environmental scheme to another, depending on the objectives and prescriptions of the individual schemes, whether any environmental designations are present in the schemes' physical boundaries, and, whether a group possesses an institutional interest in any part of the flora and fauna encapsulated within MAFF's agri-environmental scheme(s) (Table 7.2).

% FRCA PO/APO Implementing Individual Scheme						
Interest Group	ESA	CSS	NSA	Habitat Scheme	Moorland Scheme	Countryside Access
English Nature	95	100	40	75	100	50
County Archaeologists	92	100	40	25	0	100
NFU	81	91	100	25	100	50
FWAG	81	100	60	50	0	50
County Wildlife Trusts	89	100	20	25	0	50
CLA	73	82	100	25	0	50
RSPB	78	100	0	50	0	0
Environment Agency	68	91	100	25	0	0
Countryside Commission	68	91	40	25	0	100
County Councils	70	91	40	0	0	100
National Trust	78	72	20	25	0	50
District Councils	68	82	40	25	0	100
English Heritage	62	100	0	25	0	100
Forestry Authority	86	27	20	25	0	0
National Parks Authority	41	36	0	25	100	0
Parish Councils	30	55	20	25	0	100
Ramblers Association	19	45	20	25	0	100
Commoners' Association	35	9	0	25	100	0
Ministry of Defence	27	0	20	0	0	0
CPRE	22	9	0	25	0	0
Countryside Management Group	11	36	0	25	0	0
Moorland Group	5	9	0	0	100	0

Table 7.2. Interest groups FRCA POs/APOs are in contact with in different agri-environmental schemes (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

Scheme Prescriptions

The POs/APOs implementing the Countryside Access scheme revealed, for example, that in seeking to implement the schemes' objectives - that is, the creation of new access routes on Britain's farmland, the POs/APOs are more likely to be in contact with groups, such as the Ramblers Association and the highway departments of County Councils, who are actively involved in the use and administration of public footpaths in the UK. Further, it is not surprising to find that the POs/APOs implementing the NSAs are primarily in contact with the Environment Agency who, under government legislation, are responsible for regulating farm pollution (see Lowe et al., 1997). Thus, as Table 7.2 outlines, it is evident that for many of the agri-environmental schemes implemented in the UK, the nature of the interest groups who the FRCA PO/APO may be in contact with will be greatly determined by the nature of the scheme itself.

This was further evident in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs where differences were observed in terms of the specific interest groups involved with the formulation and implementation of the individual ESAs (Table 7.3).

Breckland ESA	Cotswold Hills ESA
English Nature	English Nature
Suffolk Wildlife Trust	Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
Norfolk Wildlife Trust	Gloucestershire FWAG
Suffolk FWAG	Forestry Authority
Norfolk FWAG	Gloucestershire County Archaeologists
Suffolk County Archaeologists	AONB Joint Advisory Committee
Brecks Countryside Project	
RSPB	
Game Conservancy Trust	

Table 7.3. Local interest groups operating within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs (Source: Qualitative interviews, 1997)

Supporting their contemporaries in other areas of the UK, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs revealed that in the course of implementing their respective ESAs they are in contact with local representatives from English Nature, FWAG, County Archaeologists and County Wildlife Trusts. Interestingly, both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs made no reference to any contact with their local NFU office. Following the actor-network methodology (see Chapter 4) it was, thus, assumed that the NFU had no involvement with implementing the two ESA schemes. However, as Chapter 9 discusses in its critique of the actor-network methodology, this assumption must be treated with caution in future research.

Supporting their contemporaries further, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs went on to reveal that with the exception of the above similarities they are in contact with a number of specific interest groups as a direct result of the nature and requirements of their individual ESA schemes (Table. 7.2). The Breckland ESA PO revealed, for example, that implementing a scheme that does not target farm woodland habitats (see appendix 2), he has had no recourse to be in contact with any institution or individual with a specific interest in woodlands. “Its just one of these things. The Forestry Commission is our largest landowner in the area. They own almost 20 per cent of the land covered by the ESA, but ‘cause the ESA scheme doesn’t include any Forestry land in its prescriptions, I don’t have any need to be in contact with the Commission” (Nickson, 1997). The Cotswold Hills ESA PO revealed, on the other hand, that he is in frequent contact with his local Forestry Authority office in relation to the legislative requirements of the Cotswold Hills ESA, where it is stipulated that all agreement holders are required to obtain written advice on woodland management within the first two years of their ESA contract (see appendix 2). According to the Cotswold Hills ESA PO, the FRCA can not provide expert advice on woodland management, but will recommend that the agreement holder contacts the local Forestry Authority woodland officer where they may receive free advice in addition to obtaining grants for the maintenance of any new or existing woodland on their land. This was further supported in an interview with Gloucestershire’s Forestry

Authority woodland officer, where it was outlined that the Cotswold Hills ESA PO and APOs will frequently advise agreement holders to contact the Forestry office:

“They [PO APO] will advise them [agreement holders] to get in touch with us to get advice and to go into one of the woodland schemes, or if they want to do some planting to get in touch with us ... Occasionally you get people phoning up and saying ‘we have been in the scheme for a couple of years, we’ve just had a letter from the ESA reminding us that we need these management plans, can you help?’”.

Environmental Designations

It was hypothesised in Chapter 4 that, wherever additional designations such as SSSIs, NNRs and County Wildlife Sites are present within the physical boundaries of an agri-environmental scheme, groups such as English Nature and County Wildlife Trusts - who administer these environmental designations - may be actively involved in the implementation of the individual agri-environmental schemes. As Figures 4.4 and 4.5 highlight, there are a number of SSSIs, NNRs and County Wildlife Sites situated within both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA boundaries. In addition, the Cotswold Hills ESA is part of the wider Cotswold AONB. Supporting the hypothesis outlined in Chapter 4, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs revealed that they are frequently in contact with English Nature wherever an individual ESA agreement coincides with a SSSI or NNR. This was further emphasised by the EN conservation officer for Norfolk who outlined that:

“Basically we [EN] are the statutory body in charge of administering the NNR and SSSI system in England. So naturally, wherever an ESA agreement will coincide with these then we would expect to be consulted by the project officer”.

Likewise, the ESA POs asserted that they are in contact with the various local Wildlife Trusts in relation to the county wildlife sites present in the ESAs. Concomitantly, the Cotswold Hills ESA PO went on to reveal that, on occasion, he will be in contact with the AONB’s Joint Advisory Committee¹¹ to ensure that the objectives of the ESA and AONB do not contradict one another. “I meet them occasionally. They aren’t one of my regular contacts if you like, but it’s important every now and again just to meet up with them and chat over how our work is going, whether we can help each other in any way or perhaps where we need to work together a bit more to make sure that we don’t overlap and interfere with one another’s work” (Appleton, 1997).

¹¹The Cotswold AONB Joint Advisory Committee is formed from the 17 local authorities covering the AONB. The local authorities and the Countryside Commission contribute to the budget which funds an AONB officer and a Countryside Service made up of six rangers, three administrative staff and nearly 250 voluntary wardens (Cotswold AONB Joint Advisory Committee, 1997)

Local Interests

It is further evident in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs that the nature of the interest group networks involved with the various agri-environmental schemes is often directly related to the specific interests and objectives of the individual 'interest group'. The Breckland ESA PO revealed, for example, that since 1991 the RSPB has undertaken a survey of stone curlew populations which has often brought them into direct contact with the PO. The primary aim of this RSPB project has been to locate, mark and protect stone curlew nests, which by the nature of the bird species are situated on either bare, agricultural ground or on heathlands reminiscent of the Breckland habitat. Throughout their monitoring of the bird populations, the RSPB field officer co-ordinating the project outlined that they are frequently in contact with farmers in order to gain access on to their land and additionally to inform them where stone curlews are nesting. Often this has brought them into contact with the ESA PO as many of the farmers approached by the RSPB are ESA agreement holders. The RSPB field officer explained:

"... sometimes the ESA officer will come out with us to see what we are doing and to look at the nests on some of 'his' farmers' land. ... in particular we [RSPB] are interested in the reversion to heathland option in the ESA scheme as that is where the stone curlews prefer to nest, but when the ESA people want to look at the heathlands, to monitor it, then they have to liaise closely with us as to where the nests are because otherwise they may disturb the stone curlews".

Drawing together this section, therefore, it is evident from the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs that, as the FRCA PO/APO implements their respective schemes, contact will be made with a variety of local interest groups, many of whom have already been shown in Chapter 3 to have established an influential role in the 'new' agri-environmental advisory network. However, while this empirical data has confirmed that 'new' agri-environmental actors are involved in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes, their level of involvement and influence within MAFF's policy implementation process is yet to be fully analysed. In an attempt to further a holistic understanding of the FRCA PO's role and relative influence, therefore, the following section turns to the issue of agri-environmental power relations and, in particular, seeks to analyse how powerful and influential local interest groups have been in the implementation of the individual agri-environmental schemes.

7.3 Influence of Interest Groups.

As Chapter 3 outlined, many environmental agencies and ENGOs have become integrated at the national level in the official process of revising and formulating the UK's agri-environmental policy programme. Groups, such as the CoCo, EN, the Wildlife Trusts, and the CPRE, are invited by MAFF to comment on the current and future state of the national agri-environmental programme during official review meetings, and, through the NAEF.

Further, in recent years, groups such as the RSPB and Game Conservancy Trust have become active policy formulators, developing and administering schemes such as the new Arable Stewardship Scheme (see section 3.4.2). Despite some concern that MAFF is exploiting the environmental expertise of the conservation agencies and ENGOs (see Hart and Wilson, in press), it is widely acknowledged that never before have environmental pressure groups enjoyed such close working relations with the traditionally elite agricultural policy community. But is this reflected at the local level of agri-environmental policy formulation and implementation? Have the local interest groups followed their national colleagues and become internalised in the implementation process?

7.3.1 Local-Level Policy Formulation

Emulating their national colleagues it is evident that many of the local interest groups operating alongside the FRCA PO/APO have become enrolled into the process of formulating and reviewing individual agri-environmental schemes. In addition to the NAEF (see section 3.4.2), MAFF has established a regional agri-environmental consultation group in all of their eight regions (see Fig. 5.4), in order to facilitate discussions between MAFF, the FRCA and regional interest groups. According to MAFF (House of Commons, 1996), these groups review the operation of schemes at the regional level and oversee the work of local Countryside Stewardship Targeting Groups and ESA liaison groups who, respectively, focus specifically upon one county or ESA scheme. It is evident that in both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, biannual liaison groups are in place, providing an arena for both local statutory agencies and ENGOs to come together with MAFF and the FRCA to discuss the nature of the ESA schemes, their successes, failures and future amendments. As the Cotswold Hills ESA PO explained:

"Twice a year we have a meeting with many of the local environmental groups who have a vested interest in what the ESA scheme can do for the area. The meetings are part of MAFF's statutory requirements, so we must hold them".

The local interest groups which are invited to attend these biannual meetings by MAFF are listed in Table 7.4.

Further, MAFF (1996a) asserts that the local interest groups attending biannual liaison meetings are formally invited to comment on the current and future state of individual agri-environmental schemes when the schemes are reviewed on a five year interim basis. Indeed, at the time of the field survey, the Breckland ESA was undergoing its second review phase within which local

Regional Agri-Environmental Consultation Group

MAFF Regional Service Centres
Farming and Rural Conservancy Agency
National Farmers' Union
Country Landowners Association
English Nature
Countryside Commission
English Heritage
Environment Agency
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Wildlife Trusts
Council for the Protection of Rural England
National Trust
County Archaeologists
Local Countryside Management Projects
Local Authorities
District Councils
Forest Authority
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

Table 7.4. Groups invited by MAFF to attend Regional Agri-Environmental Consultation Groups (Source: House of Commons, 1996)

environmental agencies and ENGOS were actively involved in discussions with MAFF concerning the future development of the Breckland ESA scheme. At the onset of the review period, MAFF called upon local environmental organisations to submit comments and suggestions as to how they felt that the Breckland ESA scheme could be improved. During the field survey, the representatives of these environmental groups outlined how they welcomed this invitation and readily submitted their comments and suggestions to MAFF. In doing so, they went on to reveal how, collaboratively, the various environmental agencies and ENGOS within the Brecklands decided that, within the review process, they would attempt to act as one cohesive environmental network and, thus, submit their comments and suggestions to MAFF in the form of one joint report. According to the FWAG advisor for Norfolk, such a system appeared to work well in the case of the Broads ESA:

"When the Broads was reviewed last year [1996] along with the other first round ESAs, Chris Knights up in the RSPB office thought that it would be much better if we [conservationists] all collated our thoughts and ideas and presented them as one submission. Afterall, our aims are generally the same, and it was felt that MAFF would be more responsive to us if they only had to 'deal', effectively with one environmental report, rather than lots of little ones. ... It certainly added strength to our arguments".

Given the experiences of their colleagues involved with the Broads ESA, EN's conservation officer for Norfolk outlined that during the Breckland ESA review period he took on the task of liaising with the local environmental organisations, discussing their opinions and future visions for the ESA scheme, in order to ensure that the individual objectives of each environmental group would be encapsulated in the final report to MAFF. According to the conservation officer, "it did take quite a bit of time phoning around and getting ideas and then getting down to putting together a paper to show MAFF", but he asserted that his task had been greatly facilitated by the close working relations that already existed between the various environmental agencies and ENGOS operating within the Brecklands. Following funding through the EU's Linking Farming and Environment (LIFE) Project, for example, the Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trusts had come together with the RSPB in 1991 to form the Breckland Wildlife Partnership. The partnership sought to co-ordinate the activities of the three groups. It enabled the Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trust Breckland field officers to be employed, and assisted the RSPB in the administration of its stone curlew project (see section 7.2). Although funding ceased in 1995 the partnership continues to function and has recently grown as English Nature have joined the wildlife trusts and RSPB to extend nature conservation work within the Brecklands, and to liaise closely with one another over the ESA scheme. Additionally, the Brecks Countryside Project, part funded by the Countryside Commission and local authorities has sought to bring the individual concerns of the various interest groups together, and, in doing so, represent the social, economic and ecological environment of the Brecklands as a whole. As the Brecks Countryside Project officer helped to explain:

"... basically the Brecks Countryside Project enables all of the groups to have their say and to ensure that they all work together to achieve a holistic objective. The way that we do it is not to suggest solutions, instead we will pose questions to the different groups as to how they would tackle x, y and z ...we play devils advocate in a way, just to get all the groups talking to one another, considering each others individual objectives and trying to reach one unified objective that is the conservation and preservation of the Brecks landscape as a whole".

Indeed, in recent years, it has become increasingly evident that where the UK's nature conservation movement was traditionally characterised by fragmented groups pursuing individual interests and objectives, efforts have been made, both at the national and local level, to pull together the resources of environmental groups and, in doing so, construct a cohesive environmental movement that may lobby against the might of European and UK agriculturists (Lowe and Goyder, 1983; Micklewright, 1993; Winter, 1996). This was particularly evident in the formation of the Wildlife and Countryside Link's working group on agriculture, which has subsequently brought together many environmentalists, such as the RSPB, Friends of the Earth and the WWF, to collectively discuss the current and future position of agri-environmental policies. According to a representative of the WWF, this working group has been particularly useful for the environmental groups to liaise with one another prior to NAEF meetings:

"We try to present a united front at the forum, so we have these meetings beforehand, because it would be very easy for MAFF to pounce on differences between environmental organisations, so we meet and decide who's going to push what point, so that the environmental lobby can appear united - I think that it gives us more strength really".

At the local level this was further supported by the Brecks Countryside Project Officer who argued that, when the joint report to MAFF was drawn up:

"of course we had, as an environmental movement, already discussed what we thought needed to be done, so it wasn't that difficult putting in a joint report this time and hopefully it'll give us greater strength ... I mean, we have shown MAFF that we work well together and that we all want to achieve the best for the Breckland environment, I just hope that MAFF will now take on board some of the things that we've said".

According to the head of MAFF's conservation policy division, all efforts are made by policy officials to incorporate the ideas and suggestions of the environmental lobby. "We [MAFF] are very ready, in principle, to improve the schemes ... we welcome their ideas"(Boyling, 1997). This was supported by Norfolk's FWAG advisor who outlined that, during the Broads ESA review, MAFF listened to his suggestions and subsequently altered the ESA boundaries in accordance with his recommendations:

" During the review period of the Broads I put through a faxed copy of suggested boundary changes to cartography with a letter of recommendation from FWAG and it came through on the revised ESA maps, so it can happen".

However, while Norfolk's FWAG advisor supported MAFF's assurances that they listen to the opinions and ideas of local interest groups, many of the groups in the Breckland ESA expressed their scepticism as to MAFF's willingness to implement any of their suggestions made in the recent ESA review. They welcome the fact that MAFF will consult with them on the future of the scheme, but they believe that, at the end of the day, very little of what they say in the review meetings will be taken on board by MAFF. According to EN's conservation officer for Norfolk, this evidently occurred in the first review of the Breckland ESA scheme. "One did feel that a great deal of what was said [by the local environmental groups] was not picked up by MAFF ... we suggested ways of improving the environmental quality of the area, but to a certain extent they [MAFF] seemed more concerned about securing the well-being of the farmers" - a fact which was identified by O'Carroll (1994) who noted that, following the revision of the Breckland ESA scheme in 1993, MAFF introduced higher tier payments in an effort to appease the local farming community.

At the time of writing, MAFF's response to the second review of the Breckland ESA has not been published and, thus, analysis is unable to ascertain whether, during this second review period, the local environmental organisations have been able to influence the formulation of the Breckland ESA scheme. Likewise, the analysis has gained little information concerning the level of influence that local environmental groups have had on the formulation of the Cotswold Hills ESA scheme. Formulated and introduced in 1994, the Cotswold Hills ESA is due to embark on its first review period. According to the Cotswold Hills ESA PO, MAFF and the FRCA will make every effort to listen to the local interest groups and to take on board their suggestions, where financially feasible. However, whether they do will be interesting to analyse in future research.

Although the influence of the local environmental network in the formulation of agri-environmental policy remains questionable, Dwyer and Hodge (1996) have asserted that there is a central role for local environmental groups in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes. They argue that many environmental agencies and ENGOs have an in-depth knowledge of the local countryside that may facilitate the FRCA PO/APO. Indeed, Dwyer and Hodge (1996:278) go as far as to suggest that:

"some ENGOs might develop a role as agents for government programmes, perhaps in the identification and implementation of habitat restoration of farmers' land, which is entered into long-term set-aside or similar schemes. This opportunity would allow them to influence directly the management of countryside beyond their own reserves and to operate more pro-actively and entrepreneurial than can most government departments and agencies".

As Chapter 6 outlined, however, many of the farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs fiercely critiqued such a proposal. They claimed that environmentalists

would seek to impose their own personal objectives onto the individual farmer and would make no effort to consider the state of the farmer's livelihood as an agricultural producer. As the following section will highlight, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs have continued to defend the interests of the farming community. Although local interest groups are evidently involved in the implementation process, the FRCA POs/APOs currently uphold a confidentiality clause imposed by MAFF which has effectively limited the opportunities in which local environmental groups may influence the implementation and enactment of MAFF's agri-environmental schemes.

7.3.2 Local-Level Policy Implementation.

According to the FRCA POs/APOs surveyed through the postal questionnaire, statutory and non-statutory organisations are actively involved in the implementation of individual agri-environmental schemes, predominantly as advisors to the POs/APOs, promoters of the schemes, and often, as individual agreement holders (Table 7.5).

Reasons for Contact With Interest Groups (non-exclusive categories)	No. FRCA PO/APO	% FRCA PO/APO
Statutory Consultation	70	100
Technical Advice	66	94
Scheme Promotion	54	77
Scheme Administration	23	33
Open Days/Farm Walks	11	16
Agreement Holders	10	14

Table. 7.5. Primary reasons FRCA POs/APOs are in contact with local interest groups (Source: Postal questionnaire, 1997)

This was further evident in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs where both the POs and local environmentalists revealed that many local interest groups participate in the implementation of the individual ESA schemes, as ESA agreement holders, advisors and scheme promoters.

Agreement Holders

Initially, it was evident in the Breckland ESA, that as dominant landowners and managers of many of the environmental designations situated within the ESA boundary (see Fig. 4.4), EN and the local Wildlife Trusts have taken advantage of the financial payments on offer through the ESA scheme, and have participated in individual ESA management agreements. In relation to the four NNRs in the Brecklands, the EN conservation officer outlined, for example, that

they have entered into ESA agreements with MAFF on two of the reserves - Cavenham Heath and Thompson Common NNRs (see Fig. 4.4). Of the following two reserves - Weeting Heath and Thetford Heath - it was revealed that, ESA agreements have been developed, but the land is owned and managed by the NWT who further possess a network of smaller reserves and sites currently entered into the Breckland ESA scheme (see Fig. 4.4).

In terms of implementing their individual agreements the Wildlife Trusts and English Nature recognise that they do not require the same level of advice that the FRCA PO may give to other agreement holders. Initial discussions concerning individual ESA agreements on NNRs will tend to only involve EN and the Wildlife Trusts, as the Breckland field officer for the NWT explained:

"The discussion about what to do is largely between the Trusts and English Nature and I think that Bill [PO] is quite happy with that. I mean anything that is approved by English Nature, he is quite happy with the Trust to go in and to have the expertise to decide what to do".

However, he went on to note that while ESA management discussions initially take place between the Trust and EN, their ideas and plans must still be discussed and sanctioned by the FRCA PO.

"... All he [PO] needs to do is to know what's going on and to sanction it ... largely the decisions about what we do is made between the Trust and English Nature, but we would always go on to discuss it with the project officer as any private landowners might".

In the Cotswold Hills ESA it was evident that unlike their contemporaries in the Brecklands the local interest groups were less actively involved in the ESA scheme as individual agreement holders. As Chapter 4 outlined, the landownership of the Cotswolds is far less complex than that of the Brecklands. The majority of land is owned and managed by private individuals, with fewer nature reserves and wildlife sites occupying areas of the Cotswolds (Fig. 4.3). Where wildlife sites are owned and/or managed by the local Wildlife Trust, the conservation officer for the GWT asserted that as the ESA scheme is a relatively recent introduction into the area the majority of the sites eligible to be entered into ESA agreements are already participating in the CS scheme.

Environmental Advisors to the FRCA PO APO

While there are apparent differences in the level of involvement that local interest groups have as ESA agreement holders, it was evident in both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs that many environmentalists have been enrolled into the agri-environmental implementation process as advisors to the FRCA PO APO. As Chapter 5 outlined, the FRCA POs/APOs have access

to 'in house' specialists such as ecologists, biologists, engineers and surveyors whenever the PO APO requires specific information to assist them in implementing individual management agreements. As the PO APO postal questionnaire revealed, however, the majority (94%) of POs will, on occasion, seek the advice and expertise of local interest groups (Table 7.5). Indeed, within both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs it was evident that the POs/APOs often approach local organisations to discuss specific ESA problems or issues which the FRCA PO APO feels unable to resolve independently. In the Breckland ESA, for example, the FRCA project officer explained that:

"... we [PO APOs] have access to in-house expertise ... [but] there are aspects of ESA work where it is useful to talk to the Wildlife Trusts or English Nature".

This was further supported by one farmer interviewed within the Breckland ESA who outlined that, on one occasion, the FRCA PO visited his farm with a representative from the SWT in order to discuss the ramifications of spraying a specific species of grassland.

"He [PO] came down with, I can't remember their name now, it was someone from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. They came and looked at some hard rush which I wanted to spray with weed killer and I needed a derogation to do it. I applied for one [a derogation] and Bill [PO] came down with this bloke to discuss it".

Likewise, within the Cotswold Hills ESA, one farmer interviewed revealed that an FRCA APO once visited his farm with a county archaeologist in order to look at a specific outcrop of ancient rocks on his land, and, to discuss possible management strategies that he could adopt under his ESA agreement.

"We [farmer and County Archaeologist] had a meeting out here with Nicki Freke [FRCA APO] one day 'cause there was some sort of outcrop of ancient rocks on the farm and we discussed about it. They wanted me to put the land it was on, back to grassland ... We talked about it and I said that I would think about it, but I haven't done anything yet".

According to both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs, however, generally they will only seek advice from the local interest groups in relation to those ESA agreements that coincide with, for example, SSSIs, County Wildlife sites or sites of archaeological interest. Whenever the PO APO requires specific information on an ESA agreement that does not encapsulate such designations, the POs/APOs assert that they will tend to refer to their 'in house' specialists, rather, than one of the interest groups.

Operating as Scheme Promoters

According to a number of the local interest groups interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, they will, wherever possible, seek to promote the ESA schemes to non-agreement holders, as the following quotes outline:

"... obviously we will promote the ESA scheme wherever it is relevant" (GWT)

"... I'll suggest the ESA as a tool to any landowner wishing to manage their land in an environmentally friendly way" (SWT).

".. one time I did actually put a bit more time into actually going to visit farmers and talking to them about the ESA in the hope that some more would apply" (RSPB in Breckland).

However, the interest groups went on to outline that, having informed farmers of the schemes' existence, they will retract from the implementation process in order that the FRCA PO/APO may continue to enrol the farmers into individual ESA agreements. According to one of Suffolk's FWAG advisors:

"I'll do a brief sell of the ESA to them [FWAG members], but then I'll say that your next point of contact is Bill [PO] ... basically I wouldn't want to step on Bill's patch".

Likewise, the Breckland field officer for the SWT explained that, in terms of drawing up ESA applications:

"I let Bill [PO] do that. When you get to that level you are talking money then and if you get that wrong, people tend to get very upset ... so its just better to have someone there who has the, if you like the red hot information and that's what he's there for really".

While Suffolk's FWAG and Wildlife Trust officers spoke of their diplomatic withdrawal from the development and implementation of individual ESA agreements, the Breckland field officer for the NWT argued that, rather than choosing to step back from the implementation process, MAFF and the FRCA POs/APOs have actively discouraged local interest groups from establishing and managing individual ESA agreements. He asserted that:

"We [NWT] are very involved at a sort of policy level, refining prescriptions, advising the project officer ... [but] on the ground, we don't implement the ESA. We don't advise applicants, in fact we're not particularly encouraged to ... I think that they [MAFF] see that as very much their preserve".

Early on in the development of agri-environmental schemes many researchers, such as Cox et al. (1985a), O'Riordan (1987), and, Blunden and Curry (1988), commented upon MAFF's reluctance to enrol environmental organisations into the elite agricultural policy community.

Cox et al. (1986:186-187) argued, for example, that “in responding to environmental criticisms of modern farming, agricultural interests have been determined to preserve ... the autonomy of the Ministry and of the farming community in the administration and implementation of agricultural policy ...the most compelling has been the desire to sustain the integrity of the policy community”. In recent years, it is widely recognised that the agricultural policy community has had to readjust to increasing forms of externalisation (see Ward et al., 1995). As Chapter 3 discussed, demands from Europe, national consumers and the environmental lobby have forced MAFF to open up the agri-environmental policy process, illustrated most recently in the development of the NAESG and NAEF which have enabled environmental organisations to take a more pro-active role in formulating agri-environmental schemes (see section 3.4.2). In terms of implementation, however, it appears from the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs that MAFF and the FRCA POs/APOs have sought to maintain their authoritative control on the implementation of individual agri-environmental agreements. Although they are involved in the implementation of the ESAs as agreement holders, environmental advisors and scheme promoters, the local interest groups assert that, much to their disappointment, their role as agri-environmental implementers has been limited by MAFF’s reluctance to permit them to assist the POs in developing and managing individual ESA agreements. This is further evident where MAFF have refused to financially assist the local environmental groups whenever they provide information and advice to the FRCA POs/APOs.

7.3.3 Marginalised from the Implementation Process

As discussed, the local Wildlife Trusts operating in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs revealed that they were willing to exchange information with the FRCA POs/APOs whenever they requested specific information or advice concerning County Wildlife Sites. In doing so, the Wildlife Trusts outlined that there is an opportunity for MAFF to provide financial assistance to the Trusts in return for any information that they may provide. Currently, the FRCA POs in both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs have approached the local Wildlife Trusts for maps of their County Wildlife Sites in order to ascertain where existing and potential ESA agreements may coincide with these environmental designations. The Wildlife Trusts recognise that such co-ordination is essential for the effective conservation of the Breckland and Cotswold environments, but they argue that as charitable organisations their resources are limited and the production of such maps utilises a large proportion of their limited financial and temporal resources. As a result, the conservation officers for the local Trusts asserted that, if the FRCA POs require such information, then MAFF should recompense the Wildlife Trusts accordingly. The conservation officer for GWT argued, for example, that:

"... One of the reasons that MAFF hasn't had this information about our wildlife sites earlier is that the Wildlife Trusts nationally have had this policy that we didn't feel initially that it was appropriate for us to actually give away this data. We actually thought that they [MAFF] ought to pay for it. Some Trusts have been lucky in getting some money out of MAFF, but it isn't available, we have been told that".

Indeed, at the recent Agriculture Select Committee enquiry on 'ESAs and other UK agri-environmental schemes', the national representative for the Wildlife Trusts argued that, "MAFF should pay for data which is essential for the success of ESA schemes ... this is an important test of working in partnership with local organisations to deliver the best value for money" (Wildlife Trusts, 1997:5). However, so far MAFF have appeared largely unwilling to provide any financial assistance to local interest groups involved with the ESA schemes. In Somerset, for example, the local Wildlife Trust is a major partner in the Somerset Environmental Records Centre which collates a wide range of environmental data. Any organisation wishing to gain access to such data has to pay a nominal fee. However, when MAFF approached the Trust for information on their Wildlife Sites, they initially refused to pay the Trust for such information and only did so after a considerable level of lobbying by the Somerset Wildlife Trust (see Wildlife Trusts, 1997).

MAFF's reluctance to admit environmental organisations into the ESA implementation process was further evident during the recent review of the Breckland ESA. Both farmers and interest groups recognise that the Breckland ESA PO has a number of additional work commitments which immobilise him from taking a more pro-active role in promoting and managing the ESA scheme. One of the farmers interviewed outlined that:

"... some people have said that Bill [PO] should get out more often and tell people that they can do this, or it's okay if they do that ... but he's got a hell of a lot to do. Okay, sometimes I think that a bit more project officer input would help, especially with the conservation plan, but we're getting on alright".

However, while many of the other farmers interviewed asserted that they were also 'getting on alright' with the present level of contact that they have with the FRCA PO, it was suggested by the environmental lobby that, like the CS scheme, MAFF could provide a professional fee for the local interest groups to assist the ESA PO by establishing and managing individual management agreements. In their report to MAFF on the future of the Breckland ESA, EN stated that:

"We [the local environmental lobby] believe that there could be benefit to the efficient handling of ESA applications if a realistic fee was available to landowners to encourage them to use the expertise of countryside advisors in drawing up proposals for the scheme" (English Nature, 1996:12).

Indeed, when asked, a number of the interest groups expressed their approval of such a fee and believed that this would not only assist MAFF and the FRCA PO, but additionally, provide

long term benefits for Breckland's natural environment. During the second review of the Breckland ESA, however, it was observed that MAFF were very reluctant to take on board the idea of providing a professional fee for local interest groups. In fact it was observed at one of the review meetings that MAFF refused to discuss the proposal made by the local environmental lobby, preferring instead to focus upon the specificities of the ESA tiers and how the interest groups proposed that these could be improved. According to the Breckland field officer for the NWT, MAFF simply do not want other individuals or organisations to implement the ESA agreements.

"There has been a discussion about the implementation of a professional fee, but that hasn't been broadly welcomed as far as I know by MAFF itself ... I mean they [MAFF] are very happy for us to promote their schemes for them, but obviously they don't want us to have anything more to do with it".

Indeed, this is increasingly evident at both the national and local level of agri-environmental policy. At the recent Agriculture Select Committee enquiry, the government's own environmental agencies joined forces with national ENGOs and called for a greater transfer of agri-environmental information between MAFF and all interested parties. They argued that MAFF currently upholds a system of confidentiality whereby any information concerning agreement holders will not be released to any individual or organisation outside of MAFF or the FRCA. According to the environmental agencies and ENGOs, such confidentiality is preventing them from taking a more pro-active approach in the agri-environmental policy process. The Countryside Commission (1996:5) argued that:

"we were told early on in the review process that maps showing the agreement uptake by tier for each ESA would be available, but we have so far only obtained one such map. We would welcome a commitment by the Ministry to supply the agencies with such maps for all the ESAs under review, in advance of releasing monitoring reports. It is clear that they make a valuable addition to our understanding of scheme performance".

Concomitantly, English Nature (1996:2) stated that:

"Consultation and liaison with the project officers is good but there are some problems over the ease of access to information which has restricted our capacity as a statutory body to give advice to the required level of detail and accuracy".

According to Wirth (1986:602), the ability of interest groups to 'look in from the outside' "depends heavily on the co-operation of the 'insiders'. [However] many studies (e.g. Oyen, 1982) have shown that the principles and practice of secrecy and confidentiality frequently impede access to internal information for outsiders and may defend or protect administrative bodies from unpopular external control". At the local level, within both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, similar arguments were expressed by interest groups when discussing MAFF's system of confidentiality. The inability of the Breckland ESA PO to adopt a

pro-active approach to implementation was re-emphasised, but as the field officer for the Brecks Countryside Project (BCP) argued:

"We can not help him even though he needs it. ... Basically we haven't tackled some areas of work because we know that the confidentiality exists. For example, we don't know where there is a gap on the river valley grassland where we can approach a landowner and suggest what he [sic] can do, because we don't know who is in the scheme, what land is in it, or where more promotion is needed".

Concomitantly, in the Cotswold Hills ESA, EN argued that MAFF's confidentiality clause has seriously impeded their attempts to ensure that the Cotswold species rich grasslands are being successfully protected by existing ESA agreements. According to EN's conservation officer for Gloucestershire:

"The ESA team [PO APOs] have told us that we are to receive a map but we are still waiting for it. In the meantime we don't know the distribution of ESA agreements and as a result we can't see what areas of species rich grasslands are being protected, how they are being protected or where areas are still left outside of an ESA agreement".

In this context, it is evident that it is MAFF, rather than the individual FRCA PO/APO, which is effectively marginalising local interest groups from the agri-environmental implementation process. As Chapter 5 outlined, the FRCA PO/APO is tightly controlled by the legislative and bureaucratic boundaries of MAFF. They are expected to operate in accordance with MAFF's rules and regulations, which evidently include the imposition of a confidentiality clause preventing interest groups from gaining access to individual agri-environmental participants. In discussions with the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs APOs they did not reveal any strong sentiments concerning the imposition of MAFF's confidentiality clause. They accepted that as employees of MAFF they are bound to uphold the notion of confidentiality, thus, limiting the level of contact that many local interest groups may have with ESA agreement holders. As the Cotswold Hills ESA PO explained:

"... MAFF have this confidentiality clause which we implement. When MAFF and the farmers sign the ESA agreement it is written in that the farmers names and status as an ESA agreement holder will not be disclosed to any other organisation unless the farmers are consulted first. It's our duty to uphold that".

Given the imposition of this confidentiality clause, many of the environmental interest groups interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs went on to outline how they have turned to their respective FRCA PO as their primary link with MAFF's agri-environmental implementation network.

7.3.4 Looking Towards the FRCA Project Officer

As discussed earlier, it is evident that individuals and groups such as EN, the Forestry Authority and County Wildlife Trusts advise the FRCA POs/APOs and, on occasion, are invited by the POs/APOs to attend site visits and farm walks (see section 7.4.2). The Cotswold Hills ESA PO outlined, for example, that:

“we [FRCA] have had a number of joint events with other organisations for agreement holders. Last summer we invited all existing agreement holders to join English Nature and ourselves, to discuss appropriate management of traditional limestone grassland. It was a great success, a lot of farmers and landowners turned up and I think that they found the input that English Nature gave very useful, I know I did”.

Rarely in direct contact with existing agreement holders as a result of MAFF’s confidentiality clause, English Nature’s conservation officer for Gloucestershire outlined how these events and farm visits are one of the only opportunities that they and other local environmental groups may have any influence over the decisions and actions of individual ESA agreement holders. As the conservation officer outlined:

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for us [EN]. We actually get to meet the landowners and managers of the grassland, and are able to give them practical advice on how they may manage these vulnerable areas, whose fate is really in the hands of modern farming practices”.

As the conservation officer went on to explain, however, “... such site visits and joint events are fairly infrequent. They tend to occur once every two years, if that”. This was further supported by the Breckland field officer for the Norfolk Wildlife Trust who outlined how “we [NWT] haven’t been to an open day for along time, in fact I can’t remember when the last one was”. Given such limited opportunity in which to directly advise and influence ESA agreement holders, therefore, many of the environmental interest groups interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs outlined how they are currently reliant upon the FRCA POs/APOs to transfer information and advice, which they frequently give to the POs, down to the ESA agreement holders. The Breckland field officer for the SWT explained that:

“whenever Bill’s [PO] not too sure about some specific ecological matter, he might call me for some advice as he knows I’ve got an ecological training and good knowledge of the local environment, and of course, I’m always willing to give him any advice, as hopefully through him it’ll reach the agreement holder who normally I wouldn’t be able to advise directly. So, yea, I’m always willing to help Bill, ‘cause it helps us [SWT] as well”.

Likewise, in the Cotswold Hills ESA, the conservation officer for the GWT bluntly outlined:

“he’s [PO] our main link with those farmers in the scheme. We just hope that what we tell him gets passed on ...”

According to Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy, local-level implementers are powerful and influential gatekeepers of information. As interest groups are dependent on the FRCA PO APO, Lipsky (1980) outlines how policy makers are reliant on street-level bureaucrats to pass on relevant information to recipients of policy in order that they may implement policy makers' objectives efficiently and effectively. As Lipsky went on to outline, however, local-level implementers are highly autonomous decision-makers. In the light of their immediate working environment they may accept, reject or modify policy maker interests. Consequently, recipients of policy may seek to implement a policy that is more reflective of the street-level bureaucrat's professional decisions and action, rather than those of the policy makers'.

According to the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs every effort will be made to try to integrate local environmental objectives into the advice and information that they give to the ESA agreement holders, but, as Lipsky (1980) proposed, the Breckland field officer for the NWT questioned:

"how can we be sure that he passes on our information in the way that we [i.e. environmental lobby] would want it to be conveyed?"

In the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, it was very difficult to ascertain the extent to which the FRCA POs had, or had not, incorporated the objectives of local environmentalists into their discussions with ESA agreement holders. As chapter 6 outlined, the POs/APOs adopted a farmer friendly approach when implementing their respective schemes. They sought to communicate with farmers using a discourse with which the farmers felt comfortable and familiar. Invariably this involved discussing the farmers' own objectives and establishing how these could be implemented in relation to MAFF's agri-environmental interests. As such, it may be speculated that, in these discussions, the POs/APOs did not give high priority to the objectives of local environmental groups. They sought to assist farmers to further their own objectives and may have thus neglected, whether consciously or unconsciously, to further the objectives of environmental groups. It should be noted, however, that this is by no means a definite conclusion. Further research that focuses specifically on the discourses used by the POs, and, the origins of that discourse is needed to substantiate this line of argument.

Although little firm evidence may be gained concerning the extent to which the FRCA POs/APOs incorporate the objectives of environmentalists into discussions with farmers, many of the environmental groups in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs recognised the disadvantages in relying upon the PO/APO to transfer their advice down to ESA agreement holders. The Breckland field officer for the SWT argued, for example, that:

"... we [SWT] do advise him [PO], but its always very difficult to know if what we have advised will be used. At the end of the day we are in a situation where there are a number of people all interested in the scheme, but our interests may not all be the same. We just have to hope that Bill is sympathetic to ours and will try and get them across to the farmers".

Indeed, while many of the local environmental groups remain marginalised from MAFF's agri-environmental implementation network it would appear that they have little alternative but to rely on the FRCA POs'/APOs' goodwill and discretion to transfer their objectives down to the ESA agreement holders (see Fig. 7.1).

While MAFF's reluctance to admit many of the local interest groups into the implementation process has forced many of the groups to look towards the FRCA PO/APO, it was evident in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs that, in the case of two particular interest groups - county archaeologists and local FWAG groups, MAFF have permitted the FRCA PO to actively enrol the organisations into the official implementation process.

7.3.5 County Archaeologists

Prior to 1997, Norfolk and Suffolk county archaeologists had little direct involvement with the Breckland ESA scheme. The FRCA PO would approach them whenever he required their advice, but according to the archaeologists this was often a rare occurrence. As one of the Suffolk county archaeologists outlined:

"When we [archaeologists] first came in we were very much on the outside and I think that they [FRCA] obviously had very little experience dealing directly with archaeologists ... in fact they rarely approached us".

Recognising that archaeological interests were a central feature of the ESA scheme (see appendix 2), the Suffolk County Council's archaeological unit devised detailed guidelines for the Breckland ESA PO, outlining basic definitions of archaeological sites and appropriate management for their protection. According to the archaeologists, it was hoped that such guidelines would assist the PO in identifying archaeological sites when they visited prospective agreement holders and to subsequently advise farmers on how best to manage their land in order to maintain and conserve the archaeological remains. In recent years, however, it is evident that the Breckland ESA PO has sought to forge more intimate working links with the county archaeologists. Where previously the PO would infrequently seek the advice of the archaeologists, it was revealed that the PO currently submits ESA application forms to the county archaeology unit enabling them to identify archaeological sites on prospective agreement holders' land and, in addition, to comment on appropriate management techniques for that specific site. As one of Suffolk's county archaeologists explained:

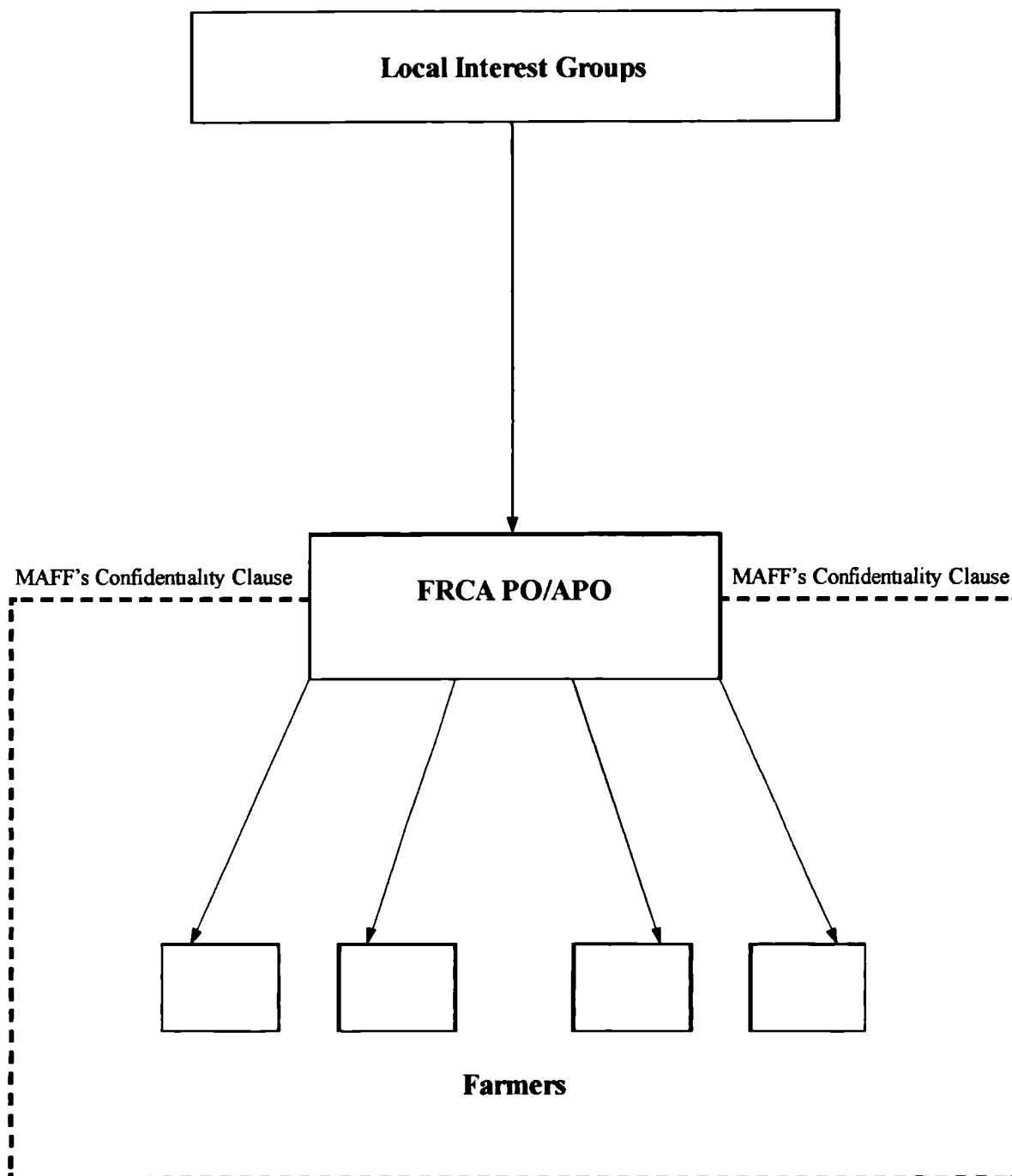


Fig. 7.1. The FRCA Project Officer-Interest Group Relationship (Source: author)

"Now, they [PO] have a different way of approaching it [the ESA]. They started to send us application areas for direct comment. I now have a map showing what area is involved and I reply back saying ... what archaeology is involved".

Emulating the Breckland ESA, the Cotswold Hills ESA PO/APOs have adopted a similar approach to implementing MAFF's archaeological requirements (see appendix 2). When the ESA was first established the Cotswold Hills ESA PO sent all the new ESA applications to the county archaeologists, whereupon they assisted the PO by identifying any recorded sites of historic and archaeological interest which were known to be present on the applicants' land. The archaeologists would then provide comments on how the archaeological sites could be effectively managed under the ESA requirements. According to one of Gloucestershire's county archaeologists, however:

"in the first year of the ESA, the FRCA forwarded on 350 applications to us and we had to go through the sites and monuments records here and identify all the recorded sites that were present on the land entered into the ESA scheme ... It was just so over whelming. We were absolutely swamped. They [FRCA] promoted their scheme almost too well in the first year. Most of the Estates were signed up then and some are huge, covering two or three parishes. Trying to identify and map all the sites and monuments for just one Estate often took me two to three days. In total I worked on the applications for six months which was madness as I had so many other commitments".

In an attempt to assist the archaeologists, a member of the FRCA has now been trained by the county archaeology team, to identify archaeological sites and monuments on ESA applications. The county archaeologists simply comment on their appropriate management, as one of Gloucestershire's county archaeologists outlined:

" ... It's changed a bit now. We still comment on any new proposed agreement, but someone from FRCA comes down and marks on the archaeological sites, they are then passed to us and we send them back to the project officer with comments on".

Although the archaeologist interviewed in Gloucestershire asserted that this change in the administration of the ESAs has enabled her to focus on other aspects of her work within the county, she went on to argue that by altering the administrative system in such a way the FRCA have, whether intentionally or not, marginalised the county archaeology team from the ESA implementation process. Once the archaeological sites have been identified by one of the FRCA APOs, the county archaeologists are still asked to comment on appropriate management practices to preserve the sites, but by actively entering the offices of the archaeologists and using their techniques and skills to identify sites and monuments the FRCA have effectively retained an active role in the archaeological network. Indeed, both Suffolk and Gloucestershire county archaeologists argued that, despite being increasingly involved in the ESA implementation process, they are only able to assist the FRCA PO APO in a limited administrative capacity. While they value this involvement, they believe that they may assist the PO APOs further by conducting more on site visits and directly advising the farming

community on how they may positively manage their land for the protection of archaeological remains. One of Suffolk's county archaeologists exclaimed, for example, that:

"... the poor project officer has got so much other stuff to worry about ... that we've said to him that we are always willing, you know after we have done these things [ESA applications], if the farmers want to talk to us directly that's fine ... but so far none have come back to us and we haven't done any site visits ... in fact we are a bit isolated up here. It's great that we are doing more than before, but we just feel that we could offer more beyond meetings and policy documents".

Likewise, the county archaeologist interviewed in Gloucestershire expressed her disappointment that they have not been enrolled into the core of the agri-environmental implementation process.

"... It would be great to carry out more site visits and also to have some feedback from the project officer on whether my comments and advice have been implemented by the farmers. At the moment I've got no idea if the ESA agreement holders are helping to preserve the archaeological sites in the county. Obviously I hope that they are after acting on my advice, but we haven't been given any of that information from the ESA team ...".

Thus, while the county archaeologists have, in comparison to other local interest groups succeeded in becoming enrolled into the official ESA implementation process, their level of contact with ESA agreement holders is evidently controlled and often discouraged by the FRCA and MAFF.

7.3.6 FWAG

In comparison, it was evident in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs that the FRCA POs/APOs willingly exchange information with local FWAG groups concerning the location of ESA agreements, the names and addresses of the individual participants, and, further, what ESA tiers the participant has agreed to implement on his/her land. As the Norfolk FWAG advisor outlined:

'we [Norfolk FWAG] have extremely good working relations with him [PO]. There is always free flow of information, maps, assistance, joint site meetings if necessary, yea there are no problems, ... we both help each other out. ... MAFF do hold confidentiality seriously but if I go and see the project officer he will usually help me out by telling me if the farm I'm due to visit is in an ESA or not".

Like MAFF, FWAG possess a confidentiality approach within their day to day work. They do not release names of farmers whom they advise and, yet, with the security of MAFF's confidentiality clause Gloucestershire's FWAG advisor argues that FWAG will readily submit information to their contemporaries within the FRCA.

" ... confidentiality is important in FWAG. Everything is always done with the landowners consent ... but they know that we frequently talk to the FRCA project officers and they [landowners] are always happy about that ... there is a pretty free exchange of information between us and the ESA team, which helps us when we are working on the ESA agreements".

Historically, FWAG have enjoyed close working relations with MAFF. As Chapter 3 outlined MAFF readily supported the development of FWAG in the early 1970s. They saw the opportunity to use FWAG as a means of staving off criticism from the environmental lobby, and acted as a primary financial and administrative supporter of local FWAG groups. Over the years FWAG has become synonymous with providing general on-farm conservation advice for the farming community. They have assiduously avoided acting as a pressure group for conservation interests and have, instead, focused upon the provision of agri-environmental advice, with greater emphasis on the agricultural interests of their farming members (Cox et al., 1985a, 1985b, 1990; Blunden and Curry, 1988; Winter, 1996). As such, FWAG has often been viewed as another agency of MAFF. They are believed to work for the agricultural industry, helping farmers to meet political and public demand for environmentally sensitive farming.

In this context it was not surprising to find that within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, the local FWAG advisors within both areas have become actively involved in the implementation of individual ESA management agreements. Within the two case study ESAs it was evident that FWAG will actively promote the ESA schemes throughout their day to day work. "It's now become a natural part of our job, to mention the FSA scheme to any farmer we're in contact with who is eligible to join the scheme" (Gloucestershire FWAG advisor). Further, Gloucestershire's FWAG advisor spoke of his role as an assistant to the FRCA PO and APOs.

"On occasion I have helped farmers to draw up their plans for the ESA application forms. We go over what they want to do, or what I think they should do and then we submit the proposal to the FRCA".

According to the Cotswold Hills ESA PO, he is extremely happy for FWAG to assist the ESA team in such a way. He explains that:

"[The FRCA] have a very good working relationship with Gloucestershire FWAG. In fact wherever a prospective agreement holder is a FWAG member, then we will always suggest that FWAG are brought in to assist us".

This was further supported by one Cotswold Hills ESA agreement holder. As a FWAG member he explained that he currently implements the FSA scheme with the help and assistance of the FWAG advisor, as recommended by the FRCA PO.

" ... he [FRCA PO] did come out. The chap [FWAG advisor] was, he was the fellow that instigated it ... well sometimes it was Richard Appleton [PO] and other times it was

Rob Macklin [FWAG advisor]. Rob has stuck with us longer and he has sort of turned into a chum now, so as we had such a good rapport, Richard Appleton said that 'I've got other things to do, so I'll leave you with Rob looking after you' and its not been a choppy ride at all".

Historically, Gloucestershire's local FWAG advisor has played a prominent role in developing farmers interest in conservation. Formed in 1979, Gloucestershire's FWAG advisory group is one of the oldest FWAG groups in the country. It currently supports a membership of 400 farmers and landowners, additionally establishing itself as one of the largest local FWAG groups within England (Macklin, 1997). Throughout the field survey, both farmers and interest groups continuously referred to the FWAG advisor. They spoke of his prominent position within the county and the considerable level of respect that the FWAG advisor has gained from the Cotswold farming community. Three of the farmers interviewed in the Cotswold Hills outlined, for example, that:

"FWAG are very good. Actually FWAG are the most useful of the lot".

"The FWAG advisor is very good ... if ever you have a problem he is out there straight away, always willing to help".

"If there ever had to be an independent body to MAFF implementing the ESA, I think that our local FWAG would be better than any other group. They have got their feet on the ground. they are realistic".

FWAG's popularity within the Cotswolds can primarily be attributed to John Hughes, the first FWAG advisor within the county. As a prominent local farmer, John Hughes was welcomed by the farming community. They believed that with his agricultural background he understood their objectives and sought to advise them on practical measures to integrate environmental concerns with their productivist objectives. According to one of the ESA participants interviewed:

"John Hughes is always so much liked because he has been a farmer. He wasn't a stop everything man. He was like you know, for example he was quote in favour of stubble burning, something these environmentalists put a stop to".

Concomitantly, a Gloucestershire farmer located outside of the ESA boundary praised the FWAG advisor and spoke of his impact upon Gloucestershire's farming community.

"John Hughes had been a very good public relations man. He went and spoke at WI¹² meetings, schools, Mother's Unions, to explain to them about farming and the environment ... he was extremely practical and a very charismatic man with great experience and enthusiasm which rubbed off on others. He had a very high public profile in Gloucestershire and was highly regarded by farmers and conservationists".

¹²Women's Institute.

As a FWAG advisor, John Hughes succeeded in enrolling many farmers into the notion of agri-environmental conservation. Indeed, before the ESA was established, it was evident that a number of farmers within the Cotswolds had taken on board the advice of the FWAG advisor and were increasingly adopting environmentally sensitive farming practices. According to the Cotswold Hills ESA PO:

"we [MAFF FRCA] had a relatively easy start to the ESA. Many farmers in the Cotswolds are naturally conservation minded. The steep landscape to the south west of the area hasn't enabled them to farm really intensively ... but FWAG has been very influential in the area. They have a long association with many farms here and have helped to change a lot of opinions".

When the Cotswold Hills ESA was established in 1994, MAFF recognised the influential position that FWAG had developed within the farming community and subsequently sought their assistance in the formulation and implementation of the ESA scheme. According to the Cotswold Hills ESA PO:

"FWAG had what, fifteen years contact on the ground in the Cotswolds so they were one of the key bodies initially to establish links with".

John Hughes has recently retired from his advisory role within FWAG, but his successor has already continued to gain the respect of both MAFF and the Cotswold farming community. One farmer participating in the ESA scheme outlined that:

"Rob is a great bloke. He can't sit still in an office. He hates paperwork and only ever wants to be out on farm visits, which is great for us [farmers]".

Concomitantly, as discussed above, he continues to assist the FRCA PO/APO in the implementation of individual ESA agreements and has effectively secured a position for himself at the core of the ESA implementation process where, operating alongside the FRCA PO, FWAG have been able to directly influence how a large proportion of the rural landscape is managed and conserved.

7.4 Conclusion.

It has been argued that, in recent years, the traditional elitism of the agricultural policy community has broken down as new pressure groups gain a foothold in the agricultural decision making nexus (see Chapter 3). Indeed, it is recognised that in terms of agri-environmental policy, environmental interest groups, such as EN, RSPB, CoCo and CWTs have become increasingly involved in the formulation of UK agri-environmental schemes (Winter, 1996; Hart and Wilson, in press). Following EU legislation, for example, MAFF

consults widely with their statutory environmental agencies and ENGOs. According to the Head of MAFF's conservation policy division the channels of communication between MAFF and the environmental groups are continuously open. He argued that MAFF welcomes the advice of the environmental agencies and ENGOs, and, believes that they provide the necessary expertise to inform MAFF on the practical application of their agri-environmental objectives.

"The ENGOs seem to be able to make contact with us [MAFF] easily and do so all the time ... I also think that they have the particular expertise which one needs to be able to reconcile the objectives with the practical mechanisms" (Boyling, 1997).

This analysis revealed, however, that within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, MAFF have attempted to retain control on the administration and implementation of agricultural policy, at the local level. It was shown that local environmental agencies and ENGOs are involved in the formulation and implementation of agri-environmental schemes. On occasion they participate in open days organised by the FRCA PO/APO and are often called on by the PO/APO for specific advice and information related to individual agri-environmental agreements. However, the FRCA POs/APOs have been forced, under MAFF's bureaucratic rules and regulations, to uphold a confidentiality clause imposed by MAFF which effectively limits the level of direct contact that the majority of interest groups may have with agri-environmental agreement holders. The only exception here is FWAG. Historically and politically aligned with MAFF, FWAG has been permitted into the sanctum of MAFF's agri-environmental implementation process. It was evident that MAFF are often ready to listen to the views and suggestions of FWAG during the review stages of individual agri-environmental schemes, and will permit the FRCA PO/APO to share information with local FWAG groups, concerning individual agri-environmental holders. In the case of the Cotswold Hills ESA, it was observed that the local FWAG officer was permitted to go as far as to act as an ESA PO, directly advising ESA participants, and often drawing up ESA management plans on behalf of the individual farmer and the FRCA PO.

Further, it was evident that as many of the local interest groups became marginalised from the agri-environmental implementation process, they were forced to look towards the individual FRCA PO as the primary gatekeeper through which their ideas and objectives could be transferred down to agri-environmental participants. As discussed, the interest groups, such as the county archaeologists and Wildlife Trusts often provided advice and information to the individual PO. The county archaeologists identified sites of historic interest on ESA application forms and commented on suitable management practices to ensure their protection. At the time of the field survey, the local Wildlife Trust in Gloucestershire, was in the process of preparing a map of County Wildlife Sites for the PO, whereupon they hoped to provide further knowledge on how such sites should be effectively managed by any ESA agreement holder.

However, as on-farm conservation advisors are reliant on the willingness of farmers to take up their advice, so the implementation of local interest group objectives was seen to be dependent on the co-operation and goodwill of the individual ESA PO. According to the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs, every effort would be made by them to integrate the environmental knowledge and expertise of interest groups into the wider agri-environmental implementation process, yet, as Chapters 5 and 6 outlined, the agri-environmental decisions and actions of the individual FRCA PO/APO are shaped and influenced by a network of actors, such as MAFF, the FRCA, farmers and local scheme factors. Thus, in this context, the extent to which the interest groups' objectives will be implemented in the locality will be mediated and influenced by the plethora of actors that constitute the POs' individual actor-network.

Drawing together the analytical findings of Chapters 5, 6 and 7, it is thus evident that, as Fig. 7.2 summaries, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs effectively exist at the interface of a number of individual actor-networks involved in the wider agri-environmental implementation process. Controlled by MAFF legislation and bureaucratic expectations, the PO is enrolled in MAFF's agri-environmental network. They operate to further MAFF's objectives and attempt to ensure that these are implemented in the locality, yet, in turn, the PO is enrolled in the networks of individual farmers. The Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs were shown to co-operate with farmers and to assist them to implement their individual agri-environmental objectives within the locality. Finally, as discussed the individual PO has evolved as an important and influential actor in the agri-environmental networks of many interest groups operating in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. The local interest groups look towards the PO as the key to gain access into the actor-networks of MAFF and individual agri-environmental participants and non-participants. In this context, the empirical analysis of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs has revealed that the FRCA POs/APOs are relatively important and influential actors in the implementation of the ESA schemes. As conceptualised within agricultural extension science, they act as pivotal gatekeepers to many actors who wish to implement their individual objectives within the wider agri-environmental policy process (see section 3.2). In light of this analytical discussion, the following section seeks to analyse what implications these research findings have for theoretical and conceptual understandings of the role and influence of local-level implementers. Chapter 8 will return to analyse the applicability of Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy, before Chapter 9 analyses the usefulness of the actor-network approach in this research.

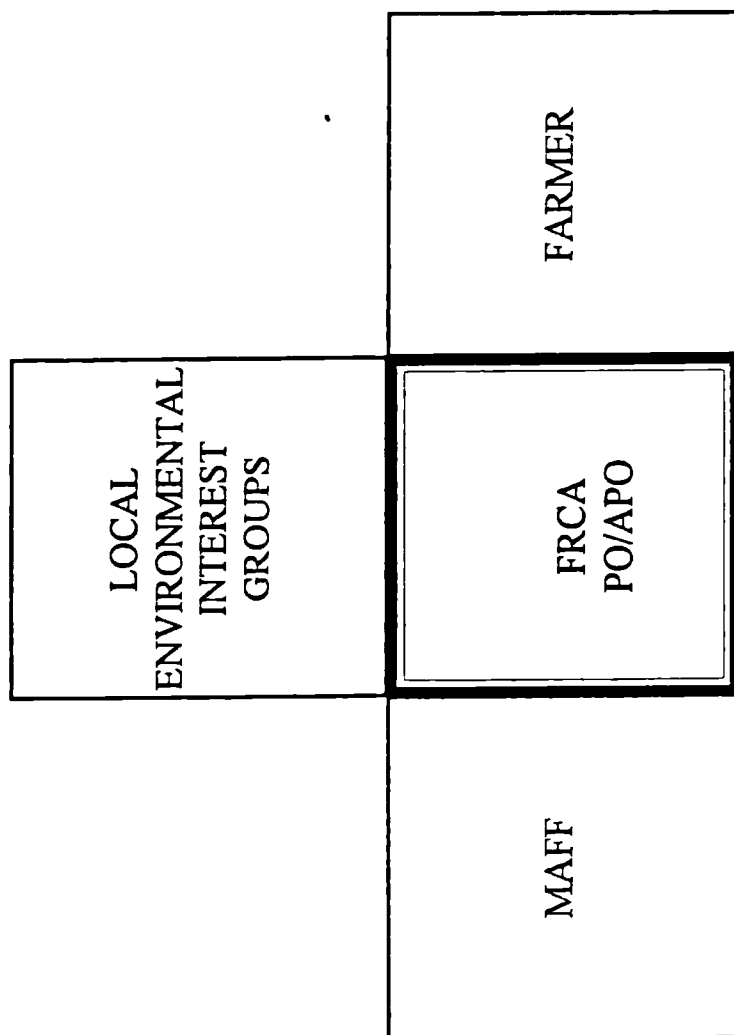


Fig. 7.2. The FRCA PO/APO at the interface of three individual agri-environmental actor-networks (Source:author)

PART V

RE-APPRAISING THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF LOCAL-LEVEL IMPLEMENTERS

One of the primary aims of this thesis was to revive interest in Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy by analysing how applicable this 'universal' theory is in providing a detailed and accurate understanding of any local-level implementer, such as the agri-environmental implementer. Throughout Part II the applicability of Lipsky's theory, in relation to the agri-environmental implementer, was brought into question as previous research studies highlighted a complex network of actors that may be involved in the implementation of the UK's agri-environmental policy. In this context, it was suggested that Lipsky's detailed micro-sociological analysis of the street-level bureaucrat may not provide a holistic understanding of the role and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer. As an alternative conceptual and methodological approach, the actor-network approach was suggested as an appropriate analytical framework to employ. This section of the thesis seeks to draw upon the qualitative data outlined in Part IV in order to analyse, in the light of empirical evidence, whether the actor-network approach has provided a more holistic understanding of the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer. In doing so, Chapter 8 will firstly analyse the applicability of Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy, before Chapter 9 returns to the actor-network approach and analyses its utility in providing a detailed understanding of the agri-environmental implementer.

Chapter 8

The Applicability of Lipsky's Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy

8.1 Introduction

As analysts of policy implementation have increasingly turned their attention to the role of actors implementing policy, Part II outlined how Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy provides one of the most detailed expositions of the role and influence of local-level implementers. Addressing such policy actors as a generic group, under the rubric of 'street-level bureaucrats', Lipsky outlines the general behavioural characteristics of local-level implementers, their relationship with other policy actors, namely bureaucratic superiors and recipients of policy, and their relationship with their immediate working environment. To date, no known attempt has been made to explicitly apply Lipsky's 'universal' theory to an analysis of any one specific local-level implementer. In an attempt to address this gap, this thesis has sought to analyse how applicable Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy is in an analysis of the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer.

Early on in the thesis, Chapter 3 set out to challenge the applicability of Lipsky's theory in relation to the FRCA PO. The chapter drew upon previous research studies to highlight that UK agri-environmental schemes are currently implemented in a complex network of actors who are involved, either directly or indirectly, in influencing the outcome of the UK's agri-environmental policy. In this context, it was argued that the micro-sociological approach adopted by Lipsky in his theory of street-level bureaucracy may provide a limited understanding of the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer in relation to their macro-social contexts. Having completed the empirical analysis of the role and influence of the FRCA PO, this chapter seeks to look back at Lipsky's theory and analyse whether it is as limiting as was initially proposed.

8.2 Relationship of Agri-Environmental Implementer with Hierarchical Superiors

As chapter two outlined, Lipsky (1980) asserts that the 'street-level bureaucrat' possesses a relatively high level of control over their bureaucratic superiors. According to Lipsky, policy officials at the 'top' of an implementation hierarchy will invariably be geographically distanced from recipients of policy and will, as a result, be reliant on the local-level implementer for any information pertaining to the enactment of policy at the ground level. In relation to the

agri-environmental implementer, it was evident that, like Lipsky's street-level bureaucrat, the FRCA PO did occupy a powerful position as a gatekeeper of knowledge and information concerning the recipients of policy. As Chapter 5 outlined, MAFF officials drew upon the information provided by the PO, in order to review existing agri-environmental schemes and to provide knowledge for the formulation of future agri-environmental policies. However, while the FRCA PO was recognised as a primary source of information for agricultural policy makers, it was evident that the PO was not the sole informant in the agri-environmental implementation network. As Chapter 5 went on to outline, both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs are monitored by an independent team of 'inspectors', employed within MAFF. Periodically, inspections are made on individual farms, where it is checked that each agreement holder is adhering to the individual scheme requirements. These reports are then transferred back to MAFF officials where they are used to assess the applicability of national agri-environmental objectives in the locality. In addition, MAFF has commissioned 'independent consultants', as part of a monitoring programme of agri-environmental schemes, to carry out detailed studies of the environmental and socio-economic effectiveness of individual schemes (see Froud, 1994; O'Carroll, 1994; Moss, 1994; Whitby, 1994). Further, it was evident that while the farm visits conducted by the FRCA PO provide a platform from which farmers can voice their concerns and interests, agri-environmental agreement holders are given the opportunity in annual liaison meetings to talk directly to MAFF officials, whereupon they may inform the policy makers of how the schemes are being received by the recipients of policy. The extent to which MAFF listens to these farmers' and takes on board their suggestions remains debatable, but it is evident that such liaison meetings, along with farm inspections provide alternative routes to the FRCA PO, through which local knowledge and experience may be transferred to policy makers. As Chapter 3 outlined, such routes are not accounted for in Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy.

Analysing the role and influence of the FRCA PO, it is further evident that Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy is limited in providing a detailed and realistic understanding of the agri-environmental implementer. In his theory, Lipsky insists that the local-level implementer will exercise a considerable level of autonomy from their bureaucratic superiors. Through fear of alienating their implementers, Lipsky asserts that bureaucratic superiors will resist imposing strict controls on the local-level implementer, and will, instead, encourage them to exercise autonomous decision-making strategies that will enable policies to be implemented in the locality as efficiently and effectively as possible. However, as Chapter 5 outlined, it is evident from the postal questionnaire and with specific reference to the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, that MAFF and the FRCA impose many more controls on the PO than hypothesised by Lipsky. As discussed, MAFF has attempted to implement the UK's agri-environmental policy in a centralised bureaucratic network. Following a hierarchical system of administration, the UK's agri-environmental schemes are formulated, administered and implemented by three

distinct levels of policy whose role and work objectives have been defined by MAFF central office. In terms of implementation, MAFF has employed a number of resources, such as statutory legislation and performance appraisal systems, in order to define, control and monitor the role of the individual FRCA PO. Under MAFF's MoU, for example, FRCA POs are expected to implement their individual agri-environmental schemes in accordance with MAFF objectives and recommendations. Unlike Lipsky's street-level bureaucrat, it was clearly evident that the FRCA POs comply with MAFF objectives. They accept their role as advisors and implementers of government policy, as asserted by MAFF, and will seek to implement MAFF's objectives in the locality.

Further to this, it was evident that the POs are embedded within the bureaucracy and hierarchy of their own agency - the FRCA. Like MAFF, the FRCA has employed a number of control mechanisms in order to define the role of the POs and to ensure that they implement MAFF's agri-environmental objectives. Through a performance appraisal system for example, the PO must return statistical information to their superiors within the FRCA. Additionally, it was evident that the PO compiles and maintains detailed reports of their interaction with each agreement holder, outlining why they were in contact with the farmers and what decisions were made by the PO concerning the individual agri-environmental agreement. These reports are then transferred to the FRCA Team Manager, whereupon, they will inspect the work and progress of the individual PO, thus, limiting the PO from conducting wholly autonomous decision-making practices.

In this context, therefore, it is evident that the FRCA POs do not possess all the autonomous characteristics of Lipsky's street-level bureaucrat. They operate in an environment of legislative controls and audits which, reminiscent of Weberian bureaucratic concepts of power (see section 2.2), control and monitor the POs' work. Such findings are replicated in the arguments of top-down theorists such as Hogwood and Gunn (1984), Sabatier (1986) and Gordon et al., (1993). It is generally accepted that conceptual interpretations of policy implementation have progressed considerably since Pressman and Wildavsky's (1973) seminal thesis on the top-down implementation of the Oakland programme (see Palumbo and Calista, 1990). Scholars recognise that implementation deficits can not simply be attributed to inconsistent and incomprehensible policy objectives. Rather, it is agreed that local-level implementers play a significant role in implementing and shaping the outcome of policy. However, where Lipsky asserts that the street-level bureaucrat is an autonomous actor whose decisions and actions will determine the implementation process, a number of scholars have returned to the top-down approach and have critically analysed the level of autonomy and power that Lipsky's street-level bureaucrat is believed to possess.

Drawing upon classical political theories (Wilson, 1887; Weber, 1947), Sabatier (1986) argues that street-level bureaucrats will generally operate in accordance with bureaucratic norms, expectations and legislative controls. Sabatier (1986) recognises that the implementers may possess some autonomous decision-making powers, but he insists that the decisions and actions of the street-level bureaucrat, like that of the FRCA PO, will be taken within legislative and bureaucratic boundaries. According to Hogwood and Gunn (1984), the street-level bureaucrat is particularly limited by legal and constitutional ruling. As individual members of society they must comply with statutory legal requirements and, thus, implement official policy maker objectives. Recently, these arguments have been further supported with reference to the British teaching profession (see Tomlinson, 1993; Moon and Hayes, 1994). It is evident that under the government's National Curriculum British teachers are legally bound to implement their specialist subject in accordance with governmental requirements, which outline the specific topics that must be taught within each discipline. While teachers may still maintain a degree of autonomy in terms of the methods they choose to implement the National Curriculum, Calderhead (1994) argues that current Ofsted inspections, coupled with national examination league tables, are additionally acting as mechanisms to monitor and control the work of the individual teacher. Thus, both legal and bureaucratic sources are increasingly limiting the autonomy of the teaching profession. This was further evident in Cerych and Sabatier's (1985) study of the British Open University where legal and political mechanisms were found to control the preferences and behaviour of University lecturers (see also, Roders and Bullock, 1976; Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1983). Summarising his critique of Lipsky's theory, therefore, Sabatier (1986:317) asserts that, "while street-level implementers are always important, official policy makers are not always as impotent to affect the outcome of local ...[decisions] as ... [has been suggested]". Street-level bureaucrats can not escape legislative ruling. They are bound by legal requirements which, in some contexts, are evidently reinforced by bureaucratic regulatory mechanisms. In short, Sabatier (1986) argues that Lipsky's conception of an autonomous street-level bureaucrat must be treated with caution. "Any assessment of the (in)capacity of official policy makers to guide local implementers ... requires a more careful analyses of ... official policy decisions" (Sabatier, 1986:316).

Indeed, when analysing the level of autonomy possessed by the FRCA POs in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, it was initially observed that MAFF permitted the individual PO some discretionary powers in order to administer derogations that enable national agri-environmental policy objectives to be implemented on individual farm holdings. However, as the analysis continued to follow the construction of the POs' actor-networks it became evident that before a derogation could be implemented by an agreement holder the recommendations and decisions of the PO had to be legally verified and passed by an official within the higher echelons of MAFF. Thus, upon further analysis of official policy decisions it was evident that Lipsky's conception of the powerful autonomous local-level implementer

needs to be questioned in reference to the agri-environmental implementer. Despite increasing evidence as to the inapplicability of Lipsky's theory in an agri-environmental context, however, Chapter 5 did go on to present qualitative data that outlined how the FRCA POs are permitted autonomous decision-making powers to decide upon the most appropriate implementation strategies to adopt within the locality.

8.3 Coping Strategies Adopted by the Agri-Environmental Implementer

As discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs are highly differentiated case study areas. The Breckland ESA scheme is a part-farm scheme, targeting specific heathland habitats. The Cotswold Hills ESA, on the other hand, seeks to enrol whole farms into agri-environmental agreements. Further, the Breckland ESA is larger in area than the Cotswold Hills ESA. There are fewer farmers participating in the Breckland scheme which is implemented by one FRCA PO, compared to the Cotswold Hills ESA which is currently implemented by one PO and five APOs. In Chapter 4 it was proposed that such differences between the two case study areas may have a profound influence on the implementation of the individual ESA schemes. In chapters 5 and 6, this hypothesis was validated as empirical evidence revealed that, given some autonomous decision-making powers, the POs within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs sought to adopt different implementation strategies in order to implement their respective schemes as efficiently and effectively as possible within the context of the schemes' requirements and additional local circumstances.

It was evident, for example, that the Breckland ESA PO had many work commitments outside of the ESA scheme which limited his level of temporal resources and, subsequently, forced him to adopt a progressive farmer strategy where the PO sought to limit the number of farmers he had to visit by targeting the larger more dominant farmers in the hope that their actions would influence smaller farmers to participate in the ESA scheme. The Cotswold Hills ESA PO, on the other hand, evidently adopted a more pro-active approach in promoting and implementing the ESA. Implementing a whole farm scheme, the PO did not have to initially target specific farmers in the area and, with the assistance of five APOs, all of those farms eligible to enter into the ESA scheme were directly contacted by the PO APOs.

In seeking to understand and explain why the POs adopted such different implementation strategies, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy provides the research with a useful analytical framework in which to understand this particular role of the agri-environmental implementer. Like the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs, Lipsky asserts that street-level bureaucrats will not seek to reformulate policy in order to selfishly advantage their own interests and objectives. Instead, they will draw upon their personal knowledge, experience

and overall professionalism in order to achieve what is best for their superiors within a specific socio-economic and political environment. As Hudson (1993:387) argues, “street-level bureaucrats end up making policy in circumstances which are not of their own choosing and which impel them to devise strategies to protect their working environment”. Faced with inadequate resources, for example, Lipsky (1980) outlines that the street-level bureaucrat may determine the outcome of policy through the adoption of a set of coping strategies that enable them to deliver policy to a proportion, if not all of the target group. These coping strategies, as chapter two outlined, may include the simplification of information given to a member of the target group, a rationalisation of time spent directly with the recipients of policy, preferential targeting as the Breckland ESA PO adopted, and a process of ‘creaming off’ whereby only those recipients of policy are approached by the street-level bureaucrat in the belief that they will respond positively to the policy stipulations (Lipsky, 1980). This is not to say that the street-level bureaucrat does not enter their work with some ideals and personal objectives vis-à-vis the implementation of policy. According to Lipsky (1980), the adoption of coping strategies is simply indicative of the prevailing structural constraints within which the street-level bureaucrat must operate.

Other studies have found Lipsky’s (1980) conception of coping strategies a useful analytical framework to use when seeking to understand and explain the decisions and actions of front-line workers (see Weatherley et al., 1980; Satyamurti, 1981; Cooper, 1985). Lowe et al. (1997), for example, referred to Lipsky’s (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy during their analysis of the working lives of pollution inspectors. Like the FRCA PO, Lowe et al. (1997) identified that, where pollution inspectors are permitted discretion from centrally devised rules, they will seek to define farmers in terms of ‘persuadable’ individuals willing to comply with farm pollution regulation, or ‘problem’ farmers who will require greater persuasion to adopt non-polluting agricultural practices. In doing so, Lowe et al. (1997) argued that the pollution inspectors conform to Lipsky’s (1980) street-level bureaucrat. “Lipsky explains that ... ‘[street-level bureaucrats] ... develop conceptions of their work and of their clients that narrow the gap between their personal and work limitations and the service ideal’ (Lipsky, 1980:xii). The field-level bureaucrats we studied conformed to this model” (Lowe et al., 1997:203). However, while Lipsky’s (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy is evidently useful in explaining the individual decisions and actions of the ‘field-level bureaucrat’ (Ward and Lowe, 1997), its applicability as a primary theory to understand the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer is brought back into question as analysis turns to the PO-farmer relationship.

8.4 Relationship of Agri-Environmental Implementer with Policy Recipients

Drawing upon previous agri-environmental research studies, Chapter 3 argued that one of the major limitations of Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy in an analysis of the agri-environmental implementer is Lipsky's failure to recognise the power and influence of policy recipients. According to Lipsky, individuals receiving policy are relatively powerless actors whom the street-level bureaucrat may manipulate and control through the strategies that they adopt to cope with uncertainties and work pressures. Lipsky argues, for example, that the street-level bureaucrat will 'box' and stereotype recipients of policy, which, in turn, control the level of involvement that the recipients may exercise in the policy implementation process. However, Chapter 3 set out to outline how farmers are regarded as extremely powerful actors in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes. The voluntary nature of the schemes ensures that farmers may possess the autonomous decision-making powers to accept or reject MAFF's agri-environmental objectives, as implemented by the FRCA POs. Further, it was revealed that a complex network of factors exist to influence farmers' agri-environmental participatory motivations and decisions. Amongst these factors a few research studies revealed that the FRCA PO was a relatively influential actor in encouraging farmers to participate in an agri-environmental scheme, although they were often secondary to financial motivations (see Moss, 1994; Skerratt, 1994; Wilson, 1996, 1997).

In the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, empirical evidence adds further support to the argument postulated in Chapter 3 - that Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy provides an inadequate explanation of the power and influence that farmers may possess in the agri-environmental implementation process. As Chapter 6 outlined, farmers are key actors in the implementation of the two case study ESAs. They have decided whether to participate or not participate in the ESA schemes and, as many farmers revealed, these decisions have been taken in relation to a number of factors relevant to the individual farmer. These included, a personal interest in conservation, a need to consider the preferences of the farm's successor and, for the majority of farmers interviewed, an interest in the financial payments on offer by the schemes. It was evident from the farmer interviews, however, that the FRCA PO did play an important role in the implementation of individual agri-environmental agreements. Many farmers regarded the PO as a friendly face of government and as a key actor transferring information from MAFF officials down to the farmers at the ground level. In this context, some may argue that Lipsky's theory emulates the relationship of the agri-environmental implementer and the farmers. According to Lipsky, the local-level implementer acts as a gatekeeper transferring important information down to the recipients of policy. However, as Chapter 6 went on to reveal, the relationship that exists between the FRCA PO and the recipients of agri-environmental schemes is far more complex than Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy can account for.

It was evident from the POs and farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs that their relationship, when implementing the ESA schemes, is one which is primarily based upon trust and respect. In the light of the voluntary nature of the ESAs, the FRCA POs have had to gain the trust and co-operation of the farmers in order to persuade and cajole them into participating in the schemes. In doing so, it was evident that, like Lowe et al.'s (1997) pollution inspectors, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs would listen to farmers' ideas and objectives, and subsequently advise them on how they could implement these within the confines of the scheme rules and MAFF's legislative boundaries (see section 5.4). In essence, the POs would seek to compromise with the farmers, to find a middle ground within which both MAFF's and farmers' individual agri-environmental objectives could be implemented. This non-dictatorial role, adopted by the POs, was evidently appreciated by those farmers surveyed. A number of the farmers interviewed spoke of their trust and respect for their individual PO and expressed their willingness to work with them to implement the ESA schemes.

In terms of analysing and understanding policy relationships based on trust little can be learnt with reference to Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy. As Chapter 2 outlined, Lipsky briefly notes that, in light of autonomous powers held by the street-level bureaucrat, policy makers will have to trust in the professionalism of the individual bureaucrat to implement policy objectives. However, beyond this discussion Lipsky neglects to consider the issue of trust in relationships that exist between street-level bureaucrats and policy target groups. Filling this gap within Lipsky's theory, reference has been made to agricultural extension literature throughout the research as it has proved to provide an informative insight into the world of the PO-farmer relationship.

Rooted within rural sociology and social psychology, agricultural extension 'science' has been primarily concerned with the dissemination of advice and information to assist farmers in the intensification and specialisation of agricultural production. To date, little reference has been made to agricultural extension within contemporary agri-environmental research studies, and yet Roling (1993) asserts that the concepts of extension science have considerable significance for the introduction and implementation of any new agricultural policy, including contemporary agri-environmental schemes. Indeed, within this research the concepts of agricultural extension have proved to be useful in understanding the relationship that often exists between farmers and advisors/policy implementers. At the heart of agricultural extension science is the issue of communication and, in particular, the assertion that effective communication is the key to the effectiveness of agricultural policies which state policy makers have entrusted extension agents to implement (see Giles, 1983; Davies, 1988; Roling, 1988; van den Ban and Hawkins, 1988; Cary, 1993). To facilitate effective communication, however, agricultural extension science

advocates that advisors must gain the trust of those farmers with whom they are in contact with. Without the trust and respect of the farming community, extension agents, such as the FRCA PO and FWAG advisors, are thought to possess limited power and influence over the strategic decisions of individual farmers (van den Ban and Hawkins, 1988). Further, agricultural extension science has provided additional information on the methodologies adopted by agricultural advisors and policy implementers. Where Lipsky outlines how the local-level implementer adopts strategies to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, agricultural extension science complements Lipsky's theory by providing a detailed understanding of the methodologies that agricultural implementers will generally adopt when seeking to persuade and enrol farmers into new innovations, whether these are technologies or policies. As Chapter 6 revealed, agricultural extension scientists generally advocate that the individual farm visit is the most appropriate implementation strategy in which to disseminate advice, and, it is one which is used by both Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs. Thus, where Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy fails to provide a detailed understanding of all aspects of the agri-environmental implementer, agricultural extension 'science' has proved to be a useful complimentary analytical tool to adopt within analysis of this one specific local-level implementer.

8.5 Relationship of Agri-Environmental Implementer with 'New' Agri-Environmental Actors

In Chapter 3 it was suggested that a plethora of agri-environmental actors may operate alongside the FRCA PO and be actively involved in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes in England and Wales. Previous research studies had indicated that there were a number of advisory sources operating at the ground level and it was postulated that Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy could not provide a detailed understanding of the relationship that a local-level implementer may have with many policy actors (see Chapter 3). Throughout his theory, Lipsky primarily focuses upon three policy actors - policy makers, the street-level bureaucrat and the recipients of policy (see Fig. 2.2). Beyond these three policy actors, Lipsky does not attempt to consider the relationship between the street-level bureaucrat and any other policy actor. As Chapter 7 outlined, however, it is evident from the postal questionnaire and interviews conducted in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, that there are a plethora of actors actively operating within the policy implementation process. These include: English Nature, FWAG, county archaeologists and County Wildlife Trusts. Moreover, as Chapter 7 went on to outline, the FRCA PO is at the centre of this interest group network. Constrained by MAFF's bureaucratic and legislative ruling, many of the local interest groups were unable to gain access to existing ESA agreement holders and to provide advice and information to them, thus, the interest groups looked towards the FRCA PO as a gatekeeper

through which their environmental objectives could be transferred down to the farming community. Evidently, however, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy provides little explanation of any such relationship occurring between local-level implementers and other policy actors. Lipsky recognises that the street-level bureaucrat occupies an influential position as a gatekeeper for policy makers and recipients of policy, but negates to consider the fact that the local-level implementer may occupy such an influential role when in contact with other policy actors.

8.6 Conclusion

Throughout Chapter 3, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy was exposed to critical analysis. A detailed review of the theory was provided, along with policy studies that have supported some of Lipsky's conceptions. However, as previous agri-environmental research studies were drawn upon, the applicability of Lipsky's theory in an agri-environmental context was increasingly questioned. Following a detailed analytical review of the empirical evidence derived from the PO postal questionnaire and from interviews conducted in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, it is evident that the research's initial suppositions are largely confirmed.

In his theory of street-level bureaucracy, Lipsky asserts that the local-level implementer is a powerful autonomous policy actor, whose decisions to cope with uncertainties and work pressures will force the individual bureaucrat to adopt specific strategies which will ultimately influence the policies that are enacted at the ground level. On the one hand, Lipsky's conceptions evidently provide a useful understanding of the implementation strategies adopted by the agri-environmental implementer. As discussed, empirical analysis revealed that the strategies adopted by the FRCA POs to implement their respective ESA schemes were greatly influenced by their immediate working environment. However, beyond this conceptualisation it is evident that Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy offers a limited understanding of the FRCA PO and, in particular, their relationship with other agri-environmental policy actors. Most notably Lipsky does not consider the autocratic relationship that exists between MAFF, the FRCA and the individual PO. Further, Lipsky provides little understanding of the complex relationships that form between both the PO and farmers, and the PO and local interest groups.

Early on in the thesis it was suggested that, in the light of a complex network of actors being involved in the agri-environmental implementation process, the actor-network approach may provide a more holistic understanding of the role and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer. As a non-deterministic approach to social science analysis it was argued that the actor-network approach may enable analysis to strip away any predefined concepts of local-level implementers' interests, relationships and influence, and, instead,

enable implementers to reveal how *they* interact with one another, how they define and interpret others' interests and objectives, and how they make decisions, and, subsequently, how they influence the implementation of the individual agri-environmental schemes. But how useful has the actor-network approach been in an analysis of the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer? Has the non-deterministic methodological approach assisted the analysis in moving beyond Lipsky's micro-sociological analysis to gain a more holistic understanding of the inter-actor relations shaping and influencing the agri-environmental implementation process? Drawing upon the empirical analysis (Part IV), the following chapter will seek to analyse the extent to which the actor-network approach has assisted in providing a detailed understanding of the decisions, actions and relationships of the agri-environmental implementer.

Chapter 9

The Applicability of the Actor-Network Approach

9.1 Introduction

Developed primarily in response to the determinism of existing micro and macro sociological theories, the actor-network approach, as Chapter 3 outlined, seeks to offer the social scientist a non-deterministic, epistemological and methodological framework in which to analyse the inter-relations of a myriad of actors spanning traditional dichotomous entities, such as the social, political, scientific, and natural (Murdoch and Clark, 1994). At the heart of the actor-network approach is the concept of what Latour (1986) describes as the ‘performative definition of society’ - that is where society is the *consequence* of actors’ decisions and actions, rather than a *cause* of actors’ views and behaviour. Accordingly, actor-network theorists assert that individual actors should not be treated as passive recipients of external structural or agency forces. Rather, they are autonomous entities who may accept, reject or modify externalities in accordance with their personal lifeworld. In this context, the actor-network approach goes on to advocate that analyses should, at the outset, seek to abandon predefined concepts and theories of society, as often expressed in the form of class, power, economies and institutional interests. Actor-network theorists are keen to assert that this does not deny that society exists, or that existing theories may provide a useful interpretation of the interactions and social relations between actors. However, they maintain that by adopting an objective and neutral stance to society analysts may discern how individual actors interpret and react to external agency and structural factors, how they construct networks of association with other actors, and, how these relations are maintained or contested. It is only by analysing *how* actors interact with one another that analysts are believed to be able to gain a greater understanding of how power and society are constituted and maintained (Latour, 1987).

Adopting these conceptual and methodological principles in the agri-environmental context of this research it was hoped that, by maintaining a non-deterministic stance to analysis and observing how the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs interact and define the objectives of other agri-environmental actors, analysis may be able to move beyond the micro-sociological boundaries of Lipsky’s theory of street-level bureaucracy (see Chapter 8) and gain a greater understanding of the role and relative influence of the

FRCA PO in relation to their micro and macro social contexts. Having completed the empirical data collection and analysis, this chapter seeks to analyse how useful the actor-network approach has been in providing an epistemological and methodological framework in which to holistically analyse the role and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer. Firstly, the benefits of the actor-network approach are discussed. Particular attention is paid to the way in which the approach enabled the agri-environmental implementer to speak out and to reveal the complexities of the implementation process in which they operate. Secondly, the limitations of the actor-network approach are addressed. Concerns are raised over the methodological constraints of understanding nondecision-making, and the question of network boundaries raised in Chapter 4 is discussed in detail.

9.2 Identifying Agri-Environmental Actors and Networks

As Part III outlined, actor-network theorists have promulgated an appropriate methodology to accompany the non-deterministic analysis of the actor-network approach. Having abandoned *a priori* theories and models of inter-actor relations, Callon (1986), Latour (1986, 1987) and Murdoch (1995) assert that, to understand how power and society are constructed through social action, researchers should, methodologically, follow actors as they construct definitions, linkages and associations with other actors. In doing so, Callon (1986) maintains that the individual researcher should remain agnostic throughout the process of empirical data collection. They should refrain from judging the way in which actors will operate and should, instead, leave actors to ‘speak for themselves’, and, in particular, to reveal their own definitions, objectives, actions and associations with other actors (see section 4.2). Through such a methodology it is asserted that analysis may gain a greater understanding of how actors operate in *their* world, rather, than that imposed upon them by the academic community. As Ackroyd and Hughes (1992:132) assert, after all it is the “point of view of the actor concerned ... which shapes his or her course of action”.

Adopting such a methodology in the agri-environmental context of this research, it is evident from the empirical analysis (see Part IV) that the non-deterministic stance of the actor-network approach has proven to be useful in enabling analysis to identify and analyse the agri-environmental implementer in relation to a network of actors not previously accounted for in existing theories and conceptualisations of policy implementers. Maintaining an agnostic and neutral position within the empirical process, the research essentially left the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs POs to speak for themselves and to define the network of actors within which they operate to implement

their individual agri-environmental schemes. Initially, as Chapter 8 outlined, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs supported Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy by revealing that they are in contact with their superiors in MAFF and the FRCA, and, in addition, with recipients of policy (i.e. farmers). However, where Lipsky limits his theory to these three policy actors (i.e. superiors, street-level bureaucrats and recipients of policy), the FRCA POs went on to further reveal that, during the implementation of their respective ESA schemes, they have developed a working relationship with a number of external environmental pressure groups - a relationship which can not be explained through Lipsky's micro-sociological analysis.

Given these empirical findings, therefore, it may be argued that if analysis had sought to adopt a structured methodological approach, based upon Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy, little, if any, information may have been gained concerning the role of environmental groups within the agri-environmental implementation process. Invariably the interviews with the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs would have been structured in order to elicit particular information related to Lipsky's hypotheses, leaving little opportunity for the POs to discuss the actors who they regard as significant within the implementation of their respective agri-environmental schemes. Adopting the non-deterministic actor-network approach, however, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs were left to speak freely and to reveal which actors they are in contact with during the agri-environmental implementation process. Thus, adopting this methodological approach, analysis has been able to gain a greater and more realistic understanding of the social contexts in which the agri-environmental implementer operates.

Identifying Agri-Environmental Networks

Developing further an understanding of the agri-environmental implementer's macro-social contexts, it is evident from the empirical analysis that the actor-network methodology has further assisted the research by widening the boundaries of its analysis and, thus, enabling examination of the breadth and complexity of the macro-social contexts in which the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs operate. As Parts II and III detailed, the actor-network approach asserts that, in seeking to analyse the power relations between actors, analysts should continuously seek to trace the construction of linkages and associations between actors. In doing so, actor-network theorists (e.g. Callon, 1986; Latour, 1986, 1987 and Law, 1995) suggest that analysts may adopt a snowball technique and analyse how those actors revealed by, for example, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs, define their own involvement in the

agri-environmental implementation process, in particular, how they describe their interaction with the POs and whether they are in contact with any other actor during their involvement in the implementation of the agri-environmental schemes. Adopting such an approach, it is argued that analysis may gain a greater understanding of the macro-social contexts in which actors such as the agri-environmental implementer operates (see Callon, 1986).

Indeed, following such a 'snowball methodology', it is evident from the empirical analysis that actors revealed by the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs were able to confirm their contact with the respective POs, and to further reveal that, throughout their involvement in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes, they are in contact with a number of different actors who may be considered as active participants within the agri-environmental implementation process. As Chapter 6 outlined, many of the farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs confirmed that they are in contact with the FRCA POs and with other actors, such as FWAG, who they consider to be an important and influential source of advice in their agri-environmental decision-making processes. Concomitantly, as discussed in Chapter 7, when many of the field officers working for the local interest groups were interviewed, they discussed their contact with the ESA POs, but further revealed how their involvement in the implementation of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA schemes is greatly influenced and shaped by the objectives of their parent organisation and the local environmental network as a whole. Thus, as Fig. 4.7 summarised, by tracing the linkages and associations that exist between agri-environmental actors the analysis has been able to identify a number of actors from varying political and institutional levels who are involved in the agri-environmental implementation process.

It is of particular interest to note, however, that while the actor-network methodology has enabled analysis to identify a myriad of actors involved in the agri-environmental implementation process, it was evident that these actors do not exist as one unified actor-network. Rather, tracing the linkages and associations between the agri-environmental actors, the analysis identified that the agri-environmental implementer exists at the interface of three distinct actor-networks where differential objectives and interests are promulgated and where actors construct unique associations with others. Initially, as Chapter 5 detailed, an official agri-environmental implementation network evidently emerged amongst the agri-environmental actors. Constructed by agricultural policy makers, this network is largely comprised of MAFF and the FRCA. As a network they are relatively insular from other agri-environmental actors. MAFF has evidently constructed few tangible links with, for example, local farming communities and

environmental interest groups, preferring, instead, to utilise the FRCA PO as a gatekeeper through which their individual objectives may be transferred to other agri-environmental actors. Consequently, it was further identified that, where other autonomous actor-networks have been constructed in the agri-environmental implementation process, they have been brought together by the PO during their day to day administration and implementation of the agri-environmental schemes. First, as Chapter 6 detailed, farmers are highly autonomous actors whose agri-environmental decisions and actions are shaped and influenced by a number of personal, economic and natural factors. Within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, it was evident, however, that in order to implement their own objectives within MAFF's legislative boundaries, the farmers were reliant on the FRCA PO for advice and assistance. Second, quite separate from the actor-networks created by MAFF and individual farmers, it was evident that the local environmental interest groups operating within the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs had constructed a network of their own. As Chapter 7 outlined, the ESA POs revealed how they are in contact with local environmental interest groups who are often agreement holders and may, on occasion, provide the PO with environmental information and advice. However, as members of MAFF's agri-environmental network the POs uphold a confidentiality clause imposed by MAFF which, with the exception of FWAG, effectively marginalises the interest groups from having any direct contact with agri-environmental participants. In this context, the local interest group network went on to outline how they look towards the FRCA PO as their primary route into the agri-environmental implementation process. It is only through direct discussions with the PO that the interest groups believe that they may have any significant impact on how farmers implement the environmental objectives of the schemes (see Fig. 7.1).

As a methodological approach, therefore, it is clearly evident from this empirical analysis that where traditional conceptualisations of local-level implementers have treated the policy implementer as an actor within a linear process of implementation (see Fig. 2.2), the actor-network approach has assisted the research in identifying and analysing the complexity of the macro-social environment in which the agri-environmental implementer operates (see Fig. 7.2). Supporting this empirical analysis, Lowe et al. (1997) recently revealed in their study of farm pollution regulation that the actor-network approach provided a useful methodological framework in which to identify and analyse the networks of actors involved in the regulation of farm pollution. Abandoning theoretically pre-defined relations, Lowe et al. (1997) sought to trace the linkages and associations between actors, whereupon they discovered that a number of individual networks had been created, drawing together a variety of actors from the political and public sphere of farm pollution decision-making.

However, while the actor-network approach offers the analyst a methodology in which to identify the complexities of inter-actor relations, how is the analyst to interpret these networks of actors? How, for example, are the agri-environmental networks constructed? Why were they constructed? Can the agri-environmental networks provide any insight into the role and influence that the agri-environmental implementer has on the implementation of the UK's agri-environmental schemes?

9.3 Understanding the Construction of Agri-Environmental Networks

In seeking to understand how networks of actors are constructed and maintained, actor-network theorists have frequently drawn upon Callon's (1986) 'moments of translation' as an 'insightful exemplar' of how actors are persuaded and enrolled into networks of association (see Marsden et al., 1993; Ahson, 1997; Lowe et al., 1997). As chapter 3 outlined, Callon (1986) asserts that there are four main stages in the construction of networks. During the first stage, *problematization*, actors will attempt to make their own ideas and objectives indispensable to other actors. According to Callon, they may adopt different modes of discourse and construct their arguments in accordance with other actors' lifeworlds, in order to persuade them of the personal benefits that may be gained if they comply to the lead actors' objectives. Having procured some alliance to their arguments and objectives, Callon (1986) maintains that the lead actor will seek to strengthen these initial associations by drawing upon intermediaries, such as empirical data and legislation (i.e. the second stage, *interressment*). As Law (1992:387) asserts, it is only "when we start to *perform* relations - and in particular when we *embody* them in inanimate materials such as texts and buildings - [that] ... they may last longer". Hence, the key to building stable and durable actor-networks is believed to involve the embodiment of a set of resources that assure actors' compliance to the network's primary objectives and interests. As intermediaries strengthen inter-actor relations, Callon goes on to outline how the construction of networks enter their third stage, *enrollment*, where the identities and objectives of actors are redefined in accordance with the perceptions and ideologies of the lead actor. In this context, Callon asserts that the lead actor will successfully turn themselves into the spokesperson for the actor-network. Their ideas and objectives will permeate throughout the network and will be advocated whenever external actors and networks are encountered (i.e. *mobilisation*).

Drawing upon this conceptualisation of inter-actor relations, it is evident from the empirical analysis that Callon's moments of translation offers the research an informative understanding of how the different agri-environmental networks were constructed, and, further, the power relations that are present within the agri-environmental implementation

process. Referring to the empirical discussion in Chapter 5, for example, it is evident that the FRCA PO has been actively enrolled into MAFF's agri-environmental implementation network through a process reminiscent of Callon's (1986) four stages of network construction. As implementers of MAFF's agri-environmental schemes it was not surprising to discover that the POs were in frequent contact with MAFF and, in particular, MAFF's RSCs. However, such contact has not been left to the discretion and goodwill of the individual PO. Rather, emulating Callon's scientists in St Brieuc Bay, MAFF has sought to secure the co-operation of the FRCA PO by placing considerable emphasis on a MoU which has effectively acted as a regulatory intermediary, determining and controlling the role and objectives of the individual PO. Under this MoU, MAFF stipulates when the PO must have contact with the RSCs and further outlines specific responsibilities which the PO is expected to fulfil when implementing their individual agri-environmental schemes. As Chapter 5 went on to outline, the POs are permitted some discretionary powers, such as in the implementation of derogations, but it was evident that even then the POs are given guidelines on which derogations may be permitted and how best these may be implemented. Utilising official documentation, therefore, MAFF has effectively exerted a level of power and influence over the FRCA PO. Through the MoU, the individual PO is compelled to act as an envoy to MAFF, implementing policy maker objectives whenever they are in contact with any other agri-environmental actor. Indeed, such is the apparent influence of MAFF over the FRCA POs that a number of agri-environmental actors have defined the PO as 'MAFF'. Many of the farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, for example, did not distinguish between MAFF and the FRCA. They viewed the PO as an official from MAFF, operating at the ground level and solely implementing MAFF's objectives (see Chapter 6).

As Chapter 6 detailed, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs did adhere to MAFF and the MoU as they attempted to enrol farmers into MAFF's agri-environmental policy network. In doing so, it was evident that the ESA POs adopted a process of enrollment, reminiscent of Callon's first stage of translation - *problematization*. Recognising that farmers are invariably a central actor within their own autonomous actor-networks, the ESA POs revealed how they attempted to gain the co-operation of individual farmers by adopting a non-dictatory role, whereby they sought to draw upon their personal agricultural experiences and knowledge in order to present MAFF's agri-environmental objectives to farmers using a discourse which the farmers could relate to. Having gained the co-operation of many farmers, the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs went on to reveal how they sought to secure farmers' alliance to MAFF's agri-environmental objectives by frequently returning to the farmers throughout the period of their

agri-environmental agreement. As Chapter 6 outlined, these individual farm visits proved to be important for both the ESA POs and for the agreement holders. Effectively acting as what Callon (1986) terms an 'intermediary', the farm visits gave the POs the opportunity to strengthen farmers' associations with MAFF's agri-environmental objectives, while additionally providing farmers with a medium through which their individual interests and objectives could be voiced to the 'official' agri-environmental policy network (see section 6.3).

Concomitantly, as Callon's (1986) intermediaries played a central role in the construction of MAFF's and farmers' actor-networks, it is evident from the empirical analysis that the development of the local environmental interest group network was determined, in part, by the utilisation and strength of an 'inanimate intermediary' (Law, 1992). As previously discussed (see Chapter 7 and section 9.2), many of the local environmental interest groups interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs outlined how they are involved in the agri-environmental implementation process, through the provision of advice and information to the ESA POs. However, beyond this, it was revealed that their active involvement in the implementation process has been markedly limited by a confidentiality clause imposed by MAFF and upheld by the POs - a clause which has effectively reduced the level of direct contact that local interest groups may have with agri-environmental agreement holders. Interestingly, in this context, it may be seen that, as a slight variant to Callon's moments of translation, MAFF have employed a confidentiality clause to act as an intermediary to marginalise and discourage the enrolment of one set of actors in an attempt to strengthen the exclusivity of their own network. Thus, where intermediaries have assisted agri-environmental actors to enrol others into their individual networks, they have, in turn, been used to discourage co-operation and alliance to one set of agri-environmental objectives - in this case MAFF's.

According to Marsden et al. (1993), analysts should be careful when using Callon's sociology of translation. "It is difficult to know to what degree ... [Callon's] ... particular moments of translation are specific to his research; and neither ... [should] ... we accept, other than an ideal type, his sequence of moments. In practice they almost certainly merge into each other and any pre-ordained sequence would introduce a rigidity that is contrary to the whole approach" (Marsden et al., 1993: 145). As such, Marsden et al. (1993) go on to assert that Callon's conceptualisation of network construction should primarily be treated as a useful exemplar. It is not in itself a theory, but rather an informative framework in which to understand how actors forge and maintain links with one another. Indeed, as an exemplar of network construction, Callon's sociology of

translation has evidently provided an original and informative understanding of how agri-environmental actor relations are established. Having identified the FRCA PO as an actor within a complex network of agri-environmental actors, it has helped the analysis to deconstruct these networks and to understand the inter-actor relations shaping and influencing the agri-environmental implementation process. The fact that, for example, the decisions and actions of the FRCA PO are largely controlled and determined by MAFF, while inanimate entities, such as farm visits and bureaucratic documentation, play a central role in shaping and maintaining the social and political relations between agri-environmental actors. Despite such an apparent utility of the actor-network approach, however, it is evident from the research that the non-deterministic methodological and conceptual approach has not been without some limitations. In the following section, these limitations are discussed and some suggestions for a revised actor-network approach are tentatively made.

9.4 Limitations of the Actor-Network Approach.

As a relatively new conceptual and methodological approach within the social sciences, the actor-network approach has been applied and critically analysed by few researchers (Ward, 1994; Munton, 1995; Ahson, 1997; Lowe et al., 1997). Studies have primarily presented the approach as a potentially useful alternative to the structural determinism of political-economy theories, but few have drawn upon empirical analysis to support their prognostications. In an attempt to address this gap in the burgeoning literature on the actor-network approach, this chapter has, so far, illustrated the applicability of the actor-network approach within an analysis of the agri-environmental implementer. However, as this section details, two particular limitations of the approach have emerged within the context of this research, and which further actor-network analyses may need to consider. These are the issues of nondecision-making and boundary emplacement.

9.4.1 Non-Decision-Making

As discussed earlier in the chapter, the actor-network approach offers the social scientist a non-deterministic methodology where actors are left to speak for themselves and to reveal their own definitions, objectives and associations with actors from a spectrum of traditionally fixed dichotomies, such as the social, natural and political. Adopting such a neutral and objective methodological approach, it was evident within the research that analysis was able to take a step beyond existing theories of local-level implementers by identifying and examining the complexity of the inter-actor relationships in which the agri-environmental implementer operates (see sections 9.2 and 9.3). However, while an

inductive methodology has evidently been one of the major strengths of the actor-network approach, it may be argued that the methodology has, paradoxically, limited the research in gaining a holistic understanding of the agri-environmental implementer in relation to their macro-social contexts.

As a methodological approach that relies on the researched to speak freely and to reveal the structure of the world in which they operate, it is evident that the actor-network approach is highly dependent upon the interviewee speaking out and telling the 'truth'. The empirical analysis and conclusions are based solely on the information provided by the researched and from any subsequent interviews with actors, who, throughout the course of the data collection, are revealed by others to be involved in the subject under investigation. But can the analysis be certain that the respondent has revealed their 'true' definitions, objectives and inter-actor relations? Given the information provided by the respondents, will analysis be able to provide an accurate representation of how actors interact and how power relations are constructed and contested?

Throughout analysis of the agri-environmental implementer these questions were often asked, particularly in relation to the level of involvement and influence that the local NFU has within the implementation of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs. As Chapter 7 outlined, both the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs stipulated within the postal questionnaire that, throughout their day to day work as implementers of the ESA schemes, they are in contact with their respective local NFU offices. However, when the research sought to apply the actor-network methodology and thus conduct in-depth discussions with the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs, no reference was made by the POs to any contact that they may have with their local NFU. While this apparent contradiction may have been an interesting issue to analyse further, the actor-network methodology adopted throughout the research limited any such investigation from taking place. In accordance with the snowball methodology advocated by actor-network theorists, the research was committed to tracing the development of actor-networks by interviewing and analysing those actors revealed to be in contact with the agri-environmental implementer (see Chapter 4). If an actor such as the NFU was not mentioned by the respondent, the actor-network methodology effectively forced the research to assume that they would not be enrolled into the lifeworlds of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs. Essentially, only those actors mentioned by the POs were further analysed.

According to Sabatier (1986), however, methodologies adopting a snowball technique, such as that encapsulated within the actor-network approach, often neglect to consider a

number of basic principles involved in social science surveys. It is widely acknowledged amongst researchers that with quantitative and qualitative interviews the responses given by the interviewees may be greatly influenced by a number of factors, such as the memory of an individual, their perceptions of the interviewer, and the location and time of the interview. While reflexive accounts may provide some contextual background to actors' responses, the snowball methodologies advocated by actor-network theorists are believed to provide little opportunity to deconstruct actors' responses and analyse "the factors *indirectly* affecting their ... [responses] ... or even the factors directly affecting such behaviour which the participants do not recognise" (Sabatier, 1993:280 - original emphasis).

Moreover, there is an established body of theory which raises questions as to the motivations underlying the issues which actors wish to reveal and discuss with others. Pioneered by Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963), this theory concerns the role that 'non-decision-making' may have in the distribution of power relations amongst actors. According to Bachrach and Baratz (1962:948), power does not simply involve examining key decisions and actual behaviour, "power is also exercised when A devotes his [sic] energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A". In other words, Bachrach and Baratz assert that actors may seek to manipulate the process of political decision-making in order to ensure that only specific 'safe' issues are raised within the policy arena which reinforce their own political and social objectives. Thus, where the objectives of one actor look set to provoke certain grievances amongst others, Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963) argue that an actor will seek to protect their own interests by adopting a non-committal approach and choosing not to voice their interests in the decision-making process. This is not directly to infer that the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs were experiencing conflict with their local NFU offices, and thus sought to direct the interview to issues which strengthened the PO's own agri-environmental interests and objectives. Rather, as Ham and Hill (1993:67) outlined, "the implication of Bachrach and Baratz's analysis is that the methodology adopted by [many] researchers ... is inadequate, or at least partial. A more complete analysis needs to examine what does not happen as well as what does happen". After all, as Crenson (1971) argues, analysing the inaction and non-decision-making of actors, analysts may gain a greater understanding of the political relations influencing the wider policy process.

However, if, as Crenson (1971) asserts, non-decision-making is a reflection of the power relations between policy actors, how can analysis study political relationships that are

created and maintained through non-decision-making practices? In short, how can non-decisions be identified and analysed? According to Bachrach and Baratz (1970), a non-decision may be defined as “a decision that results in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values and interests of the decision-maker” (p44). In this context, Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argue that non-decisions may be investigated through the identification of covert grievances and the existence of conflicts that do not enter the political arena. If no grievances or conflicts are identified then a consensus exists and non-decision-making has not occurred (see Ham and Hill, 1993). Applying this methodological approach in a study of air pollution policies in the United States, Crenson (1971) outlined that, in seeking to analyse the existence of conflicts between political actors, analysis may find assistance in existing theories, concepts and empirical studies. Essentially, by drawing upon *a priori* theories and empirical knowledge, Crenson (1971) believes that analysts may gain some clue as to where certain conflicts may arise. Consequently, analysts may focus on these areas of potential conflict and examine whether any grievances have led to processes of non-decision-making.

Drawing upon Crenson’s (1971) methodology, therefore, it is evident that in order to follow Bachrach and Baratz’s (1962, 1970) thesis - that is, the importance of analysing non-decision-making - the non-deterministic actor-network methodology may actually benefit from existing theories and concepts. As Crenson (1971) outlined, they may assist analysis to identify non-decisions and the covert political relations otherwise undetected by the non-deterministic actor-network methodology. Thus, rather than seeking to promote an inductive and non-deterministic approach to analysis, perhaps analysts should, in future, seek to combine the non-deterministic attributes of the actor-network approach with utilisation of predefined theories and concepts. In doing so, they may generate an all encompassing methodological and analytical approach in which to study the power relations between a myriad of actors from the social, political, economic and natural.

Developing this notion of a paradoxical approach, where the non-deterministic principles of the actor-network approach are combined with the rigidity of existing theories and concepts, the following section focuses on the issue of network boundaries and discusses further the idea of placing a rigid framework on the inductive actor-network methodology.

9.4.2 Network Boundaries

As discussed throughout Part III and earlier in this chapter, the actor-network approach advocates that, to understand how power and society are constructed through the action and inter-relationships of social actors, analysis must follow the actors as they construct linkages and associations with one another and, further, observe how individual actors accept, reject or manipulate the interests and objectives of others. While this inductive methodological approach has assisted the research in identifying and analysing the complexities of the networks in which the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs operate (see section 9.2), questions were raised early on in the thesis concerning the extent to which analysis must follow and observe the construction of actor-networks (see Chapter 4). How far are analysts expected to trace the linkages and associations between actors? Are there any physical or theoretical boundaries to the methodology, or, is research expected to analyse infinite networks?

According to actor-network theorists, some networks may possess a natural boundary to analysis - that is, where researchers can no longer find any linkages between actors. In his study of biotechnological innovation, Ahson (1997) found, for example, that the "research and development networks of the R & D managers initially interviewed were quite small; for instance, in the case of the genetically engineered *chymosin*, only two people were key in the process" (p4). Accordingly, for those particular actors, it was evident to the researcher that a natural boundary was in place and analysis could not proceed further. However, at any other point in the actor-network analysis, Callon (1986) asserts that the issue of boundaries should not effectively be an issue for question. As a non-deterministic approach to social science analysis, the actor-network approach has sought to move away from the rigidity and determinism of traditional sociological analysis. Thus, to place rigid boundaries on to the network analysis would defy the primary principles of the actor-network approach (Latour, 1987).

Indeed, as a methodology it is recognised here that the fluidity and non-determinism of the actor-network approach are ideal analytical objectives in seeking to holistically analyse micro and macro social relations. However, it was apparent during the field research in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs that practical research limitations, such as time and financial considerations, forced a personal judgement to be made concerning where and when to cease following the agri-environmental actors. Essentially, as the snowball methodology proceeded in the field, it was evident that for some agri-environmental networks, most notably MAFF's, the linkages and associations established between actors were, possibly, to extend into the European arena. Given that

the research process was limited to pre-specified financial and temporal resources, it was apparent that analysis would be unable to 'follow' the agri-environmental actors beyond a national level. Consequently, a cut-off point for the actor-network methodology was chosen and executed. This involved following actors to the national level of political and institutional settings. If their networks looked set to extend further, the research attempted to draw upon existing research studies and literature in order to gain information concerning inter-actor relations beyond the national level of analysis. In the case of MAFF's agri-environmental implementation network, for example, it was evident that as analysis traced the network of actors from the local level - starting with the FRCA PO - and followed it through to officials within MAFF's RSCs and then to officials within MAFF's headquarters in Whitehall, the network looked set to continue through into the European arena. Essentially, as Chapters 1 and 5 outlined, in the formulation and implementation of the UK's agri-environmental schemes, MAFF's objectives are directly influenced by the regulatory objectives of the EU, as currently outlined in the form of EU Regulation 2078 92/EEC. However, despite their inclusion within MAFF's agri-environmental network, the research did not physically follow the actors or interview relevant officials within the EU. Rather, drawing upon studies such as Whitby (1996), Potter (1998) and Hart and Wilson (in press), the research was able to gain some understanding of the role and influence that the EU possesses within MAFF's actor-network.

As a methodological approach it is recognised that relying on previous research studies for empirical information is far from ideal. However, given common research limitations it is perhaps the most appropriate method to adopt in order to gain a detailed understanding of individual actor-networks. Indeed, analysing infinite networks is idealistically sound, if analysis seeks a holistic understanding of micro and macro social relations. However, can actor-network theorists guarantee that all researchers will be able to follow the actors? As this research has highlighted some may not. In this context, it is evident that the issue of network boundaries, both theoretically and methodologically, needs to be addressed in future actor-network analyses. Currently it is left to the individual researcher to make a personal judgement as to where the boundaries should be placed, but can theorists devise a universal approach to the issue of boundaries which does not compromise the non-deterministic benefits of the actor-network approach? Such a concept is indeed a theoretical and methodological challenge, but one which, if addressed, would benefit future studies of actor-networks.

9.5 Conclusion

It was suggested early on in the thesis that, given the potential limitations of Lipsky's micro-sociological theory of street-level bureaucracy, the actor-network approach may provide the analysis with a more holistic understanding of the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer in relation to their macro-social contexts. Drawing together the analytical discussions in this chapter, it is evident that the actor-network approach has assisted the study in gaining a detailed and informative analysis of the role and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer. As a non-deterministic methodological approach, the actor-network approach initially assisted the analysis in identifying the agri-environmental implementer as part of a complex network of actors drawn from a variety of institutional, political and spatial scales. Moreover, it helped to highlight that the FRCA PO exists at the interface of three autonomous actor-networks, each possessing differential objectives and interests. Subsequent to this, Callon's (1986) sociology of translation provided an original and informative understanding of how these agri-environmental networks were established, highlighting, in particular, the role and influence that inanimate entities, such as farm visits and bureaucratic documentation, have within the agri-environmental implementation process.

However, despite the apparent utility of the non-deterministic conceptual and methodological approach, the research revealed that there were two fundamental limitations to the actor-network approach - that is, the disregard for non-decision-making and the issue of boundary emplacement. In both contexts, the utility of the non-deterministic philosophy of the actor-network approach was brought into question. Firstly, it was recognised that through a non-deterministic approach, analysis enabled actors to speak freely and to reveal their own definitions, objectives and associations, but in doing so little information could be gained concerning those issues which actors chose *not* to reveal during the research process. Secondly, while the inductive actor-network methodology was promulgated as a useful methodological approach, it was in turn argued that, given common research limitations (e.g. limited financial and temporal resources), attempts may be made to place an appropriate boundary around those actors who may be empirically analysed. As of yet, the actor-network approach does not provide any clause for such an event, and thus, it was suggested that future research may seek to devise a methodology that does not limit the non-deterministic benefits of the actor-network approach and yet would assist researchers to overcome the dilemma of where and when a boundary should be placed around the research methodology.

At this stage of the research, the thesis has been able only to offer suggestions as to how the actor-network approach may be developed and improved for future analyses. In the context of non-decision-making, for example, a suggestion was made for combining the non-deterministic actor-network approach with the utilisation of pre-existing theories and concepts. However, to build upon the current advantages of the actor-network approach, further analysis is needed to address the limitations of the approach and to develop its potential as an all-encompassing conceptual and methodological approach for understanding social and political processes.

PART VI

CONCLUSION

As the intractability of policies continues to be of concern to many policy makers and academics this thesis has sought to further an understanding of the policy implementation process by analysing the role and influence that local-level implementers have on the implementation of contemporary policies. It is a widely held belief that local-level implementers, or street-level bureaucrats as they are often termed, are among one of the most powerful and influential policy actors in the implementation process. They are believed to be the formulators and implementers of policy. “It is through implementation ‘on the street’ that *de facto* regulatory policy is created” (Lowe et al., 1997:203). However, as Chapter 2 revealed many of the contemporary scholars who have discussed the role and influence of street-level bureaucrats have tended to base their arguments on early theoretical and empirical studies with little attempt at conducting their own analysis of the contemporary local-level implementer. Addressing this gap within current policy research, this thesis has sought to provide an analytical study of one contemporary policy implementer - the agri-environmental implementer (i.e. FRCA PO). Further, as part of this analysis, the research has attempted to develop analysts’ conceptual understanding of the street-level bureaucrat by testing existing theories (i.e. Lipsky, 1980) and analysing whether a new conceptualisation of the street-level bureaucrat is required.

In this final section of the thesis the empirical and theoretical analysis of the research are drawn together. Focusing on the agri-environmental context of this research, Chapter 10 will firstly discuss the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer with specific reference to the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs. Particular attention is paid to the complexity of the agri-environmental implementation process and the relationships that exist between the FRCA PO and the primary agri-environmental actors. Second, the theoretical debate of the thesis is outlined. The applicability of Lipsky’s theory of street-level bureaucracy is summarised and conclusions drawn on the appropriateness of the actor-network approach in this research. Finally, drawing upon the research findings, some suggestions are made for future studies of policy implementers.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

10.1 The Role and Influence of the Agri-Environmental Implementer

Focusing on the agri-environmental implementer as a case example for analysing the contemporary policy implementer this research has addressed a major gap in agri-environmental research studies, and has further provided a new insight into the world of the street-level bureaucrat. Since the development of European and UK agri-environmental policies, many researchers have sought to analyse and understand the implementation and effectiveness of the voluntary agri-environmental schemes formulated under EU Regulations 797/85/EEC and 2078/92/EEC (Whitby, 1994, 1996; Winter, 1996; Potter, 1998). In doing so, there has been a tendency amongst researchers to analyse the agri-environmental decision-making nexus of farmers, and, more recently, to examine the influence that wider macro-structural factors have had on the agri-environmental implementation process (Potter and Gasson, 1988; Brotherton, 1991; Morris and Potter, 1995; Wilson, 1996, 1997). However, as Part II of the thesis illustrated, little attempt has been made to build upon existing research studies, and analyse the role and influence that the individual agri-environmental implementer has on the implementation and effectiveness of the UK's agri-environmental schemes.

As Chapter 3 outlined, FRCA POs are actively involved in the implementation and administration of many of the voluntary schemes formulated as part of the UK's contemporary agri-environmental policy programme. Operating at the ground level environment, they assist policy makers by promoting the schemes amongst those farmers eligible to participate in the agri-environmental schemes. Further, they seek to advise and encourage all eligible farmers to join the schemes, and, following this, to assist both MAFF and the farmers by working with the agri-environmental participants to devise the most appropriate management agreements in which they may integrate MAFF's national agri-environmental objectives into their individual farm management plans. Currently, MAFF has invested a large proportion of their agri-environmental budget in employing the FRCA POs. According to MAFF (1995), the POs are the key to the success of the agri-environmental schemes. "It is through the efforts of the POs that many attitudes have changed towards the schemes, and many farmers have participated" (MAFF, 1995:25). Thus, MAFF assert that while the cost of the POs may be high, it has been a worthwhile investment. But has it? Are the POs such powerful and influential actors who determine the 'success' of the agri-environmental schemes?

Theoretically, local-level implementers were shown in Chapter 2 to be highly influential policy actors. Granted autonomous decision-making powers by bureaucratic superiors, reliant upon the goodwill and co-operation of the policy implementer, scholars asserted that the decisions and actions of the individual local-level implementer will ultimately determine the shape and form of the policies that are received and implemented by recipients of policy. Adopting a case study approach, and focusing on the role and influence of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs, this research has shown that the agri-environmental implementer is a relatively powerful and influential actor in the implementation of MAFF's individual agri-environmental schemes. However, as Part V of the thesis revealed, the level of power possessed by the FRCA PO is determined and controlled by complex actor-network relations which, to date, have not been acknowledged by earlier scholars conceptualising the role and influence of the local-level implementer.

First and foremost, the research revealed that the FRCA PO operates in a bureaucratic environment where their decisions and actions are closely controlled and monitored by their superiors in MAFF and the FRCA. Like Lipsky's street-level bureaucrat, it was evident that MAFF utilised the POs as gatekeepers through which national agri-environmental objectives could be transferred to the individual farmer. However, where Lipsky asserted that the implementers would be given sufficient autonomy in which to make their own decisions and choices throughout the implementation process, the research has revealed that the FRCA POs are bound by rules and regulations whereby they are compelled to adhere to their paymasters' objectives. Further, it was evident that where the POs were granted a limited degree of discretionary freedom, notably in the administration of derogations and adoption of implementation strategies (see Chapter 4), the decisions and actions of the PO were controlled, firstly, by the prescriptions of the schemes formulated by MAFF, and secondly, by local and personal factors, such as farming group dynamics and the POs' own temporal resources. Thus, at any one point in the implementation process, the actions of the PO were, in effect, a product of another actor (see Fig. 5.6).

The research has gone on to show, however, that as a local representative of this bureaucratic network, the FRCA PO is, for many other agri-environmental actors, an important and influential gatekeeper through which their personal agri-environmental objectives may be infiltrated into MAFF's official policy decision-making and implementation process. It is widely acknowledged that farmers are powerful autonomous decision-makers whose willingness and ability to participate in MAFF's voluntary agri-environmental schemes will be an initial determinant of the relative 'success' of the schemes. Throughout the thesis, this fact was not questioned. It is accepted that, in the light of the voluntary nature of the schemes, farmers will ultimately decide whether to participate in the schemes or not. However, building upon existing research studies, this thesis sought to analyse whether the FRCA PO, in anyway,

influences the enactment of the UK's agri-environmental schemes. As Chapter 6 revealed, the FRCA POs recognise that farmers are autonomous decision-makers whose attitudes towards the agri-environmental schemes will be shaped by a multiplicity of factors. Operating against this background, the research outlined how the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs sought to adopt the most appropriate implementation strategy in which to encourage farmers to participate in the schemes and, following this, to implement MAFF's agri-environmental objectives within the locality. The POs recognised that adopting a regulatory role in the field would be met with extreme resistance from the farmers. Instead, defining their position as an advisor and facilitator, the POs were seen to work with the non-participants and participants in the two case study ESAs. They sought to listen to the farmers, to understand their personal objectives and to assist them to integrate national agri-environmental objectives into their own visions and plans for their individual farm business. In seeking to gain the trust and co-operation of the farming community in such a way, Chapter 6 went on to reveal that for many of the farmers interviewed in the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, the FRCA POs have become an important actor in their personal agri-environmental networks. Many of the farmers spoke of their respect for the FRCA PO. They reiterated the fact that the PO will assist them to implement their own objectives, a fact which, according to many farmers, has been possible as a result of the agricultural background that the majority of the POs possess. The farmers voiced their disdain towards the proposal that officers from environmental groups may, as the RSPB (1996) asserted, be better advisors and implementers for the agri-environmental schemes. They evidently favoured the existing FRCA POs, whom they regarded as an important link to the world of the official policy maker. It was through the FRCA PO that farmers were able to implement their own objectives within the wider legislative boundaries of MAFF's official agri-environmental implementation process.

Concomitantly, it was the individual FRCA PO who, for the local interest groups involved with the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESAs, represented the key through which the door into the agri-environmental implementation process may be opened. As Chapter 7 outlined, a number of interest groups are involved with the UK's agri-environmental schemes, often as agreement holders, advisors and consultants. However, with the exception of FWAG who, historically has enjoyed close working relations with agricultural policy makers, MAFF have attempted to retain their control on the agri-environmental implementation process by introducing a confidentiality clause whereby local interest groups are unable to gain direct access to agri-environmental participants. In this context, it was evident that for many of the interest groups in the two case study ESAs, the FRCA PO was the primary route through which their environmental objectives may be transferred down to existing agreement holders. In this context, the research has shown that operating at the interface of three different actor-networks - MAFF, farmers and local interest groups (see Fig. 7.3) - the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs have empowered themselves as key actors in the lifeworlds of many

agri-environmental actors. It is the FRCA PO who facilitates the implementation of their objectives.

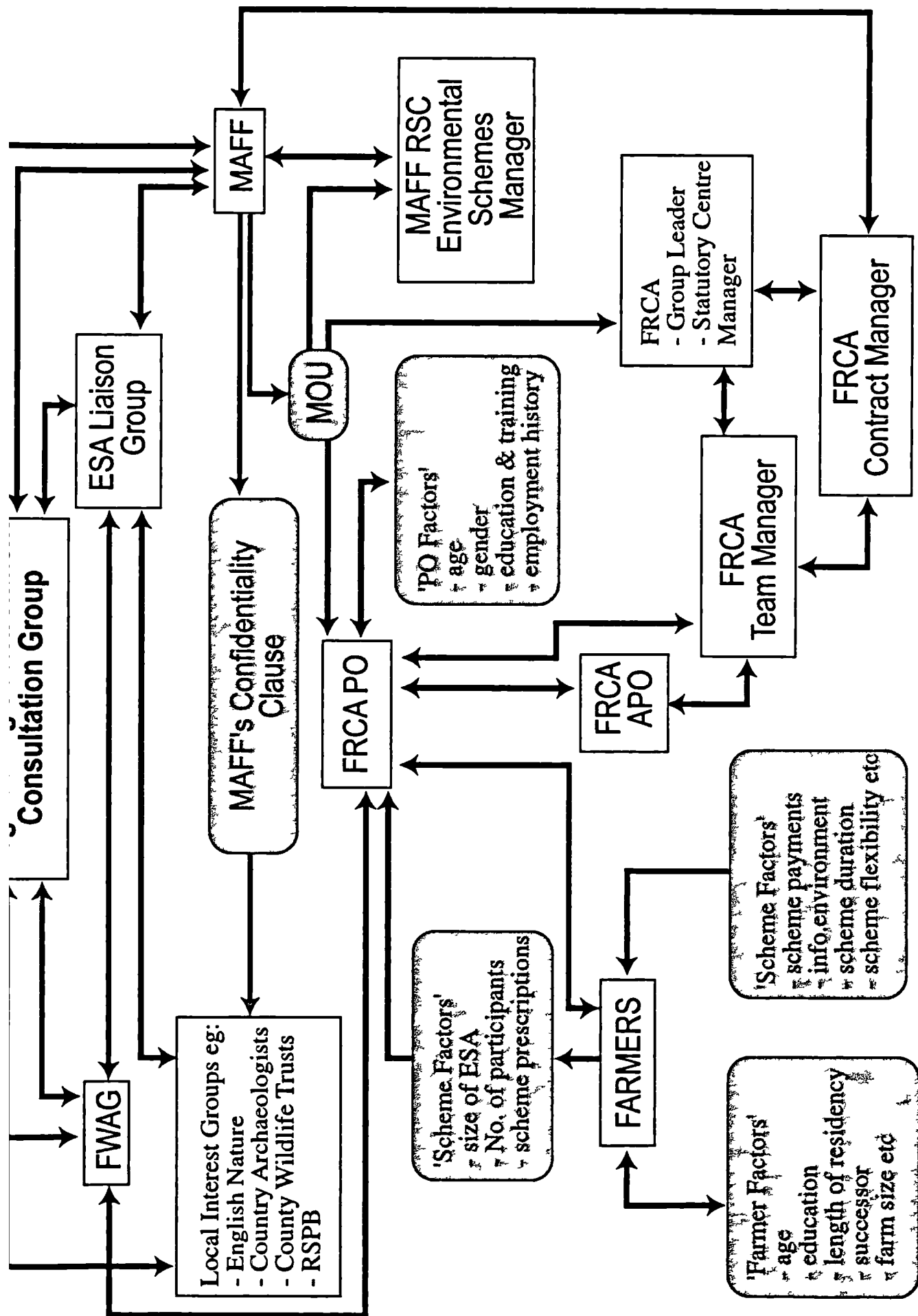
While this research has shown the FRCA PO to be an important and influential actor, MAFF's assertions that they are the key to the 'success' of the UK's agri-environmental schemes remains questionable. In recent years, an increasing number of researchers have turned to address the issue of how the 'success' of agri-environmental schemes should be defined and measured. Some researchers are currently suggesting that the success of the schemes are dependent on the extent to which the local environment and wildlife has been enhanced by the schemes (Adams, 1996), while others have embarked upon research to analyse socio-economic indicators of agri-environmental 'success' (Papps, forthcoming). As a platform from which some of these studies may progress, this research has shown that there are a number of actors involved in the implementation of agri-environmental schemes who may, either directly or indirectly, influence the enactment of policy at the ground level. The FRCA PO is a central actor within this implementation process, and it is evident that for many actors MAFF's investment in the POs has been crucial to their own personal objectives. But it would be wrong to assume that the 'success' of the agri-environmental schemes is wholly dependent on whether the PO is employed or not. As Fig. 10.1 summarises, the PO operates in a network of actors. Agricultural policy makers and researchers should not forget this complex network as, collectively, the actors contribute to influencing the course of the agri-environmental implementation process and shaping the outcome of the individual agri-environmental schemes. Even then this research can not claim to have completed the network of actors which are involved in the UK's agri-environmental policy process. Continuous research is required to build upon existing studies in order to construct and analyse the agri-environmental network as it changes through space and time.

10.2 A New Conceptualisation of the Street-Level Bureaucrat

While this research has assisted future agri-environmental studies by highlighting that the agri-environmental implementer does have an important role to play in the network of actors implementing the UK's agri-environmental policy, the empirical findings of the research have also had important implications for how the local-level implementer should be conceptualised in future policy studies.

As Part II of the thesis outlined, Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy provides one of the most detailed conceptual understandings of the role and influence of local-level implementers. He describes their relationships with bureaucratic superiors and recipients of policy, and outlines the influence that the implementer will have on the policy process. As this thesis

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sought to revive interest in the local-level implementer, so it attempted to analyse the applicability of existing theoretical and conceptual understandings of policy implementers in the contemporary policy process. In Chapter 3, concerns were raised early on that Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy would not be applicable in the agri-environmental context of this research. Drawing upon previous agri-environmental research studies which highlighted the number of actors who may operate alongside the agri-environmental implementer, the research proposed that Lipsky's micro-sociological analysis of the street-level bureaucrat could not provide an adequate understanding of the complex actor relations that may exist between the FRCA PO and other agri-environmental actors. In the light of the research's local empirical analysis, this early speculation has been confirmed (see Chapter 8). Lipsky's theory can not provide a holistic understanding of the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer. This is not to assert, however, that Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy should be consigned to the academic waste bin. As Chapter 8 revealed, aspects of Lipsky's theory have proved to be informative in explaining some of the decisions and actions of the Breckland and Cotswold Hills ESA POs. The implementation strategies adopted by the POs in the light of personal and scheme factors were in some way reminiscent of Lipsky's 'coping strategies'. Further, Lipsky recognised that the street-level bureaucrat will act as a gatekeeper between policy actors. But in his theory Lipsky only considered the relationship between three actors - bureaucratic superiors, the street-level bureaucrat and recipients of policy. He did not provide any explanation of the street-level bureaucrat within complex actor-networks where power relations are transitory and determined by a multiplicity of actors.

Early on in this study, as concern was raised as to the applicability of Lipsky's theory in relation to the agri-environmental implementer, the thesis sought to adopt an alternative conceptual and methodological approach in which to situate the research. Given its apparent ability to analyse the power relations between networks of actors, the actor-network approach was adopted. As an epistemological framework, the actor-network approach has, to date, received little attention from policy analysts. Within the field of rural studies, a small group of researchers have attempted to apply the approach (e.g. Marsden et al., 1993; Lowe et al., 1997), but knowledge of its applicability in policy research is limited. As Chapter 9 revealed, however, the actor-network approach has proven to be useful as an epistemological and methodological framework in which to analyse the role and influence of the agri-environmental implementer. Abandoning *a priori* definitions, the actor-network approach has moved away from Lipsky's attempts to define an all encompassing theory of local-level implementers and has, instead, enabled the research to observe who or what is of importance to the agri-environmental implementer, and, from here, to construct networks of actors who are involved in the agri-environmental implementation process. In doing so, the actor-network approach has been far more revealing of the relationships and relative influence of the agri-environmental implementer than Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy. It has

enabled the research to extend beyond Lipsky's micro-sociological analysis of local-level implementers, and to holistically analyse the agri-environmental implementer in relation to the actors whom they identify with, rather than actors whom a theory asserts that the implementer will influence or be influenced by. Nonetheless, as Chapter 9 revealed there are a number of methodological limitations to the actor-network approach. Drawing upon Bachrach and Baratz's (1962, 1963) thesis, the question of non-decision-making was firstly discussed. Given the non-deterministic methodology advocated by actor-network theorists, it was suggested that analyses may fail to observe and identify hidden political relations that often underlie actors motivations to discuss certain actors and not others. Consequently, it was proposed that, where the actor-network approach seeks to offer the analyst a holistic conceptual framework, analysis may benefit from drawing upon existing theories and concepts of covert political relations. While some analysts (e.g. Callon, 1986; Latour, 1987) may argue that this contradicts the primary principle of the actor-network approach, it was further revealed that, faced with common research limitations, analysts may be forced to place predefined boundaries on the networks under analysis. As Chapter 9 concluded, this research can only offer some suggestions as to how the actor-network approach may be developed and improved. In many respects the approach has been proven here to be highly effective in an analysis of the agri-environmental implementer. However, it is believed that in order to build upon the advantages of the actor-network approach further empirical research grounded within an actor-network analysis is needed.

In this context, much can be learnt from this thesis concerning our future understanding of the local-level implementer. It is re-emphasised here that the local-level implementer is an important policy actor who warrants analysis in any study of policy implementation. They may not be the key to the implementation and effectiveness of individual policies, but may instead operate alongside a complex network of actors who together shape and influence the implementation process. Further, in seeking to analyse the local-level implementer, policy analysts should attempt to move beyond existing theoretical and conceptual understandings of policy implementers. This is not to deny that they may provide a useful insight into the world of the individual local-level implementer, but each implementer should be treated as a unique policy actor, whose role and influence can only be understood in relation to the network of actors in which they operate. In this context, the actor-network approach can offer the contemporary policy analyst a useful epistemological and methodological framework in which to situate their research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

COMPOSITION OF THE NATIONAL AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF),
- Farming and Rural Conservancy Agency,
- Department of the Environment,
- English Nature,
- Countryside Commission,
- English Heritage,
- Forestry Authority,
- Environment Agency,
- National Farmer's Union,
- Country Landowners Association,
- Game Conservancy Trust,
- National Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group,
- Council for the Protection of Rural England,
- World-wide Fund for Nature,
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds,
- The Wildlife Trusts,
- SAFE Alliance.

APPENDIX 2

BRECKLAND ESA AND COTSWOLD HILLS ESA MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

Breckland ESA Management Prescriptions

Tier I - Heathland:

£140 per hectare, per annum.

- * Agreement holders must maintain heathland vegetation, by not ploughing, re-seed or cultivating
- * The heathland must be grazed hard, but not with pigs or poultry.
- * On known important sites for ground nesting birds, agreement holders must agree a stock management programme in advance of the breeding season.
- * Agreement holders must not apply fertilisers or fungicides on the heathland.
- * Herbicides may only be used to control specified weed species (e.g. nettles, Ragwort, dock & thistle) and only then can they apply the herbicides by wick applicator or spot treatment.
- * Any bracken or scrub control must be carried out in accordance with a programme agreed in advance.

Tier II - Reversion to Heathland.

£350 per hectare, per annum.

- * Agreement holders must cease arable or grassland production immediately after harvesting any crop already in the ground
- * Within 12 months of the start of an agreement, participants must begin an agreed programme of reversion to heathland which will include, ploughing the land, establishing a nurse crop & establishing a low productivity grass sward by 15 March.
- * Agreement holders must not apply any fertilisers, fungicides or insecticides to the reverted land
- * Herbicides may only be used to control specified weed species (e.g. nettles, Ragwort & thistle) & only then can they apply the herbicides by wick applicator or spot treatment.
- * After establishment the heath sward must be managed by grazing &/or cutting.

Tier III - River Valley Grassland.

£130 per hectare, per annum.

- * Agreement holders must avoid cultivating & cutting grassland between 31 March and 1 July.
- * Grassland must be lightly grazed with livestock other than pigs or poultry.
- * Agreement holders must not apply any fertilisers, fungicides or insecticides to the reverted land
- * Herbicides may only be used to control specified weed species (e.g. nettles, Ragwort, dock and thistle) and only then can they apply the herbicides by wick applicator or spot treatment
- * Agreement holders must maintain existing drainage systems without improvements, additions or modifications.

Tier IV(a) - Arable Field Margins/Uncropped Wildlife Strips.

£370 per hectare, per annum.

- * Agreement holders must cease cropping on arable land at least 6ms in from existing field edge
- * Agreement holders must create a seedbed in the headland between 31 July and 31 March
- * Agreement holders must not apply fertilisers, fungicides, insecticides or herbicides to the strip
- * Agreement holders must not use strips as access tracks
- * Agreement holders must not irrigate the land or sow grass on the strip
- * Regularly cultivate & apply herbicides to a 1m strip on the edge of the strip

Tier IVb - Conservation Headlands.

£110 per hectare, per annum.

- * Agreement holders must create a strip of uncropped land 6-12ms wide at edge of arable fields
- * Agreement holders must not apply any insecticides to the strip, except between 31 August and the following 15 March.

Public Access Tier.

£170 per hectare, per annum.

- * Agreement holders may create access routes, available free of charge to the public across their land
(MAFF, 1992)

Cotswold Hills ESA Management Prescriptions.

Tier Ia: All Land.

£15 per hectare, per annum

- * Agreement holders must restrict the expansion of their existing arable area
- * All application rates of organic or inorganic fertiliser must not exceed existing levels
- * Agreement holders must maintain all landscape features (e.g. walls, banks, hedges & ditches)
- * Agreement holders must refrain from ploughing/spraying on land within 1m of any wall or bank
- * Agreement holders must maintain walls, banks & hedges in a stockproof condition
- * Agreement holders must protect any sites of known historic and/or archaeological interest.
- * Agreement holders must refrain from erecting new permanent fences
- * Agreement holders must get advice on siting, design & materials of new proposed buildings
- * Agreement holders must not transfer stock from ESA land to common land.
- * Within 2 yrs of an agreement, participants must obtain advice on the management of woodland.
- * Dry stone walls on agreement land **MUST** be restored using traditional styles and materials (Minimum requirement is 0.25ms of wall /ha/yr & a maximum of 2ms of wall /ha/yr).
- * Agreement holders **MAY** restore non-stock proof hedges to a stock proof condition. (Minimum requirement of 0.5ms /ha/yr & a maximum of 2ms of hedge /ha/yr).

Tier Ib: Improved Permanent Grassland.

£30 per hectare, per annum

- * Agreement holders must follow all of tier Ia prescriptions and in addition;
- * Maintain improved permanent grassland without ploughing, levelling or reseeding.
- * Must not harrow or roll unless they are current agricultural practices on the agreement land.
- * Improved permanent grassland must be grazed with livestock other than pigs or poultry.
- * Agreement holders must rotate areas used for supplementary feeding of livestock.
- * Land managed as hay meadow must continue as such.
- * Agreement holders must exclude stock from meadows at least 7 weeks before first cut of hay.
- * Agreement holders must cut meadows annually for hay, not for silage. They must cut in any year before 8 July, removing the cut crop and grazing the aftermath.
- * Agreement holders must maintain existing application rates of organic and inorganic fertiliser.
- * All applications of fungicides and insecticides are prohibited on agreement land.
- * Herbicides may only be used to control specified weed species (e.g. nettles, ragwort, dock & thistle) & only then can they apply the herbicides by wick applicator or spot treatment.

Tier Ic: Extensive Permanent Grassland.

£65 per hectare, per annum.

- * Agreement holders must comply with Tier Ia and Tier Ib (where appropriate) and in addition;
- * Maintain extensive permanent grassland by refraining to carry out any mechanical operations on the grassland during 1 April to 8 July.
- * Agreement holders must graze the land with sheep and/or cattle.
- * On valley bottom grassland, stocking levels must not exceed a level of 0.75 LU/ha during the periods of 1 April to 31 May.

Tier 2: Reversion of Arable to Extensive Permanent Grassland

£290 per hectare, per annum

- * Agreement holders must cease arable production
- * Within 7 months of agreement, a permanent sward must be established
- * During the first 7 months of agreement, participants must observe all tier Ia prescription
- * Following this, agreement holders must adhere to tier Ib and tier Ic prescriptions.
- * During each of the 3 years following the establishment of the grass sward, agreement holders must cut the grass, remove the cut crop as hay and graze the aftermath

Public Access Tier.

£170 per hectare, per annum.

- * Agreement holders may create access routes, available free of charge to the public across their land (MAFF, 1995).

APPENDIX 3

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS SENT TO FARMERS IN THE BRECKLAND AND COTSWOLD HILLS ESAs¹.

Farmer Information Sheet - Breckland ESA.

Name:

Address:
.....
.....
.....

Telephone No.

1. Are you eligible to participate in the Breckland ESA scheme?

Yes []

No []

2. Please tick the appropriate box;

i) I am currently participating in the Breckland ESA scheme []

ii) I am not participating in the Breckland ESA scheme []

3. What is your status on the farm?

Sole proprietor []

Partner with spouse []

Partner with parent []

Partner with successor []

Partner with other relative []

Partner with non-relative []

Farm manager/director []

Other (please specify)

4. Is the farm;

Freehold []

Leasehold []

Rented []

Other (please specify)

¹ Although the following questions are written specifically for farmers in the Breckland ESA, an identical set of questions were sent to farmers in the Cotswold Hills ESA with necessary changes made to the text (i.e. the replacement of 'Breckland ESA' for 'Cotswold Hills ESA')

APPENDIX 4

POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRE: FRCA PROJECT OFFICERS AND ASSISTANT PROJECT OFFICERS.

This questionnaire is designed to investigate how the FRCA Project Officers and Assistant Project Officers implement agri-environmental schemes and their interactions with other contributors to the schemes. Any information collected will be treated as strictly confidential and will only be used for the purpose of a personal PhD research project. However, it is hoped that the findings may assist FRCA in the implementation of the schemes. Although this questionnaire does appear to be extremely lengthy, it will become apparent that many of the questions may not be relevant to your own situation. It has been agreed with MAFF and FRCA that you should only spend one and a half hours completing this questionnaire. Once you have done this could you please return the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided by **Friday 10th January, 1997**. If you have any questions please phone Nicola Cooper on 0171 836 5454 Ext. 1204.

PART A: The Project Officer's/Assistant Project Officer's Role in Agri-Environmental Schemes.

**For Office
Use Only**

- 1. Are you the project officer/assistant project officer for more than one agri-environmental scheme (e.g. ESAs, Habitat Scheme - Water Fringe, Former Set-Aside and Saltmarsh, Countryside Stewardship Scheme, Countryside Access, NSAs, Moorland)?**

If you administer two ESAs for example, please count each ESA as a separate scheme.

Yes ☐ 1
No ☐ (if no, go to question 4) 2

- 2. What schemes are you the project officer assistant project officer for? (If you administer more than one ESA or NSA please specify which ESAs or NSAs you administer).**

ESAs	[] a)	1
	b)	2
Habitat Scheme - Water Fringe	[]	3
- Saltmarsh	[]	4
- Former Set-Aside	[]	5
Moorland	[]	6
NSAs	[] a)	7
	b)	8
	c)	9
	d)	10
	e)	11
Countryside Access	[]	12
Countryside Stewardship Scheme	[]	13

3. What proportion of your time do you spend on each scheme? 3
(please specify in percentages for each relevant scheme).

ESA a	[]	1
ESA b	[]	2
Habitat Scheme - Water Fringe	[]	3
- Saltmarsh	[]	4
- Former Set-Aside	[]	5
Moorland	[]	6
NSA a	[]	7
NSA b	[]	8
NSA c	[]	9
NSA d	[]	10
NSA e	[]	11
Countryside Access	[]	12
Countryside Stewardship Scheme	[]	13
Total: 100%		

If you administer more than one scheme, please answer the remaining questionnaire in relation to the scheme which occupies most of your working time.

Please specify what this scheme is

4. In what year did you become the project officer assistant project officer 4
for this agri-environmental scheme?

5. With regard to this agri-environmental scheme, what are the main 5
objectives of your work?

**PART B: The Relationship of the Project Officer/Assistant
Project Officer with MAFF.**

6. Do you have any direct contact with individual representatives
from MAFF?

6

Yes ☐

1

No ☐ (if no, move to question 11)

2

7. In which MAFF offices are they primarily based?

7

MAFF Headquarters, London ☐

1

Regional Service Centre ☐

2

(Please specify which centre)

8. On average how many times per year are you in contact with:
(Please answer for both)

a) MAFF Headquarters

b) Regional Service Centre

8. 9.

0 ☐

0 ☐

1. 1.

1-5 ☐

1-5 ☐

2. 2.

6-10 ☐

6-10 ☐

3. 3.

11-15 ☐

11-15 ☐

4. 4.

16-20 ☐

16-20 ☐

5. 5.

21-25 ☐

21-25 ☐

6. 6.

25+ ☐

25+ ☐

7. 7.

9. Where does this contact mainly take place?

(Please tick one box only)

10.

At MAFF Headquarters, London ☐

1

At Regional Service Centres ☐

2

(please specify which centre)

At FRCA Headquarters, London ☐

3

At FRCA Statutory Centres ☐

4

(Please specify which centre)

Other (please specify)

.....

5

10. How is this contact primarily made? 11.
(please tick one box only)

Through meetings	[]		1
By File	[]		2
At Open Days	[]		3
In the Field	[]		4
By Telephone	[]		5
By Fax	[]		6
By E-mail	[]		7
Other (please specify)	[ ]	.....	8

11. Do you have a copy of the administrative instructions, relevant to ‘your’ 12.
agri-environmental scheme? (i.e. The Regional Service Centre chapters. For the
ESA scheme for example this is ‘Chapter GRA 8’).

Yes	[]		1
No	[]		2

If no, have you seen it? 13

Yes	[]		1
No	[]		2

12. Do you have a copy of the technical instructions relevant to ‘your’ 14
agri-environmental scheme?

Yes	[]		1
No	[]		2

If no, have you access to them? 15

Yes	[]		1
No	[]		2

13. On average how many times during the year do you refer back to 16
these technical instructions?

Frequently (e.g. once a week)	[]		1
Sometimes (e.g. once a month)	[]		2
Rarely	[]		3
Never	[]		4

14. Do these instructions permit technical discretion?		17
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
15. Do you often use this discretion in your day to day work?		18
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
16. Were you able to have any input into the formulation of the technical instructions relevant to 'your' agri-environmental scheme?		19
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> (move to question 17)	1
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
If no, would you change these technical instructions?		20
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
If yes, how would you change them?		21

PART C: Relationship of the Project Officer/Assistant Project Officer with ADAS/FRCA.

17. How many years have you been employed within ADAS/FRCA?		22.
18. Were you employed by ADAS prior to your involvement with the agri-environmental scheme(s)?		23.
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
No	<input type="checkbox"/> (move to question 21)	2

19. What section within ADAS were you previously employed? 24.

20. What did you work specifically entail? 25.

21. On a scale of 1-9, who do you have the most contact with when implementing 'your' agri-environmental scheme?
(i.e. by letter, meeting, fax etc.).
(1 = most contact, 9 = least contact. Thus, for example, if you are in contact with your team manager more than any other individual put a 1 in the box next to "Your FRCA Team Leader").

The FRCA Contract Manager	[]	26
Your Statutory Centre Manager	[]	27
Your FRCA Group Leader	[]	28
Your FRCA Team Leader	[]	29
Project Officers administering the same agri-environmental scheme	[]	30
Project Officers administering other agri-environmental schemes	[]	31
Assistant Project Officers administering the same agri-environmental scheme	[]	32
Assistant Project Officers administering other agri-environmental schemes	[]	33
Resource Planning Group?	[]	34

22. What tends to be the main reason for such contact?
(please specify for each relevant category)

i) The FRCA Contract Manager: 35

ii) The Statutory Centre Manager: 36

iii) The Group Leader:	37
iv) The Team Leader:	38
v) Project officers administering the same agri-environmental scheme:	39
vi) Project Officers administering other agri-environmental schemes:	40
vii) Assistant Project officers administering the same agri-environmental scheme:	41
viii) Assistant Project officers administering other agri-environmental schemes:	42
ix) Resource Planning Group:	43

PART D: Relationship with other ‘interest groups.

23. Which ‘interest groups are actively involved with ‘your’ agri-environmental scheme (i.e. they may own/manage protected areas also covered by the scheme, and/or advise farmers and landowners on agri-environmental issues)?

(Please tick as many as appropriate)

Ministry of Defence	<input type="checkbox"/>		44
NFU	<input type="checkbox"/>		45
CLA	<input type="checkbox"/>		46
English Nature	<input type="checkbox"/>		47
Countryside Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>		48
Forestry Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>		49
RSPB	<input type="checkbox"/>		50
Council for the Protection of Rural England	<input type="checkbox"/>		51
English Heritage	<input type="checkbox"/>		52
County Wildlife Trusts	<input type="checkbox"/>		53
National Trust	<input type="checkbox"/>		54
National Parks Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>		55
Environment Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>		56
Rambler’s Association	<input type="checkbox"/>		57
County Councils	<input type="checkbox"/>		58
County Archaeologists	<input type="checkbox"/>		59
District Councils	<input type="checkbox"/>		60
Parish Councils	<input type="checkbox"/>		61
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	<input type="checkbox"/>		62
Commoners Association	<input type="checkbox"/>		63
Others (please specify)		.....	64
		.....	65
		.....	66
		.....	67
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	(go to question 28)	68

24. Have they influenced *you* during the implementation and administration of the agri-environmental scheme?

69

Yes []

1

No []

2

If yes, in what way have they influence your work?
(please specify for each relevant group)

25. Approximately, how many times per year are you in contact with these 'interest groups'? (please specify for all those that are relevant)

Ministry of Defence	[]	94
NFU	[]	95
CLA	[]	96
English Nature	[]	97
Countryside Commission	[]	98
Forestry Authority	[]	99
RSPB	[]	100
Council for the Protection of Rural England	[]	101
English Heritage	[]	102
County Wildlife Trusts	[]	103
National Trust	[]	104
National Parks Authority	[]	105
Environment Agency	[]	106
Rambler's Association	[]	107
County Councils	[]	108
County Archaeologists	[]	109
District Councils	[]	110
Parish Councils	[]	111
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	[]	112
Commoners Association	[]	113
Others (please specify)	.....	114

26. In general who initiates these contacts?

(For each 'interest groups' who is involved with 'your' agri-environmental scheme please indicate using the relevant numbers from the menu below as to who initiates the contacts between yourself and that 'interest group'.

E.g. If you assistant project officer initiates the majority of those contacts which you may have with the Ministry of Defence, please write in number 2 in the box next to the Ministry of Defence. If any other individual or organisation initiates the contact please write number 4 in the box and decide it, write the name of the individual or organisation).

Yourself	[1]
Your project officer(s)/assistant project officer(s)	[2]
A representative from the 'interest group'	[3]
Any other actor or organisation	[4] (please specify)

Ministry of Defence	[]	118
NFU	[]	119
CLA	[]	120
English Nature	[]	121
Countryside Commission	[]	122
Forestry Authority	[]	123
RSPB	[]	124
Council for the Protection of Rural England	[]	125
English Heritage	[]	126
County Wildlife Trusts	[]	127
National Trust	[]	128
National Parks Authority	[]	129
Environment Agency	[]	130
Rambler's Association	[]	131
County Councils	[]	132
County Archaeologists	[]	133
District Councils	[]	134
Parish Councils	[]	135
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	[]	136
Commoners Association	[]	137
Others (please specify)	.....	138

**27. Why are contacts made? (e.g. Technical advice guidance, scheme administration and/or statutory consultation requirements).
(please specify for each group)**

i) Ministry of Defence: 142

ii) NFU: 143

iii) CLA: 144

iv) English Nature: 145

v) Countryside Commission:	146
vi) Forestry Authority:	147
vii) RSPB:	148
viii) Council for the Protection of Rural England:	149
ix) English Heritage:	150
x) County Wildlife Trusts:	151

xi) National Trust:	152
xii) National Parks Authority:	153
xiii) Environment Agency:	154
xiv) Rambler's Association:	155
xv) County Councils:	156
xvi) County Archaeologists:	157

xvii) District Councils:	158
xviii) Parish Councils:	159
xix) Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group:	160
xx) Commoners Association:	161
xxi) Other (please specify)	162

28. Have you ever experienced any technical differences of opinion with farming/landowning 'interest groups' (e.g. NFU, CLA), in terms of local issues related to the implementation of the agri-environmental schemes (e.g. individual applications, commons, water level management)? **166**

Yes ☐ **1**
 No ☐ **2**

If yes, why did the problem arise and who was responsible?
 (please specify for each relevant farming/landowning interest group) **167**

How was the problem resolved?
 (please specify for each relevant farming/landowning interest group) **175**

29 Have you ever experienced any conflict with **wildlife interest groups** (e.g. NFU, CLA, RSPB), in terms of local issues related to the implementation of the agri-environmental schemes? **179**

Yes ☐ **1**
 No ☐ **2**

If yes, why did the problem arise and who was responsible?
 (please specify for each relevant farming/land-owning interest group) **180**

How was the problem resolved?
 (please specify for each group, if relevant) **204**

PART E: The Relationship of Project Officers/Assistant Project Officers with Farmers/Landowners.

Please continue to answer the questions in reference to that agri-environmental scheme which occupies most of your working time.

30. What are the approximate figures of participant farmers in 'your' agri-environmental scheme? **205**
(please tick one box only)

0-20%	[]		1
21-40%	[]		2
41-60%	[]		3
61-80%	[]		4
81-100%	[]		5

31. What do you think are the main determinants of whether a farmer will participate in an agri-environmental schemes or not? **206**

32. On average how many times a year do you have contact with farmers/landowners; (please answer for all)

i) Before application	[]		207
ii) Between application and agreement	[]		208
iii) After agreement	[]		209

33. How are these contacts mainly made? **210**
(please tick one box only)

Farm Visits	[]		1
Telephone	[]		2
Evening Meetings	[]		3
Open Days	[]		4
Others (please specify)		.....	5

**34. What methods do you use to promote the scheme to farmers/landowners?
(please tick as many boxes as appropriate)**

Local Press	<input type="checkbox"/>	212
NFU CLA Journals	<input type="checkbox"/>	213
Open Days	<input type="checkbox"/>	214
Technical Events	<input type="checkbox"/>	215
Letters	<input type="checkbox"/>	216
Telephone Calls	<input type="checkbox"/>	217
Cold Call Visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	218
FWAG Meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	219
Agricultural Shows	<input type="checkbox"/>	220
FRCA Newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/>	221
Other(s)	.....	222

35. What role do you have in drawing up the scheme applications? **226**

36. In general, do you believe that farmers/landowners adhere to your advice? **227**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	2

If no, why not? **228**

37. What other sources of advice do you believe farmers/landowners use when implementing statutory agri-environmental schemes?

(Please tick as many boxes as appropriate)

Ministry of Defence	<input type="checkbox"/>	229
NFU	<input type="checkbox"/>	230
CLA	<input type="checkbox"/>	231
English Nature	<input type="checkbox"/>	232
Countryside Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>	233
Forestry Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	234
RSPB	<input type="checkbox"/>	235
Council for the Protection of Rural England	<input type="checkbox"/>	236
English Heritage	<input type="checkbox"/>	237
County Wildlife Trusts	<input type="checkbox"/>	238
National Trust	<input type="checkbox"/>	239
National Parks Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	240
Environment Agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	241
Rambler's Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	242
County Councils	<input type="checkbox"/>	243
County Archaeologists	<input type="checkbox"/>	244
District Councils	<input type="checkbox"/>	245
Parish Councils	<input type="checkbox"/>	246
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	<input type="checkbox"/>	247
Commoners Association	<input type="checkbox"/>	248
Others (please specify)	.....	249

38. In your opinion did it take you a long time (i.e. over a year) to build up a rapport with those farmers/landowners located in the area of your work? 253

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	2

If yes, why? 254

39. Have you ever experienced hostility from any member of this farming community? 255

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, what form did this hostility take? 256

40. In general, how would you describe your relationship with the farmers, both participating and no participating in 'your' agri-environmental scheme?
(Please answer for both)

a) Participants: 257

b) Non-Participants: 258

41. How would you describe your role as a project officer/assistant project officer (e.g. a regulator of government policy, an advisor, a friend)? 259

PART F: The Personal Background of the Project Officer/Assistant Project Officer.

42. What is your original background? **260**
(Please tick one box only)

Brought up on a farm	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
Rural Background	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Urban Background	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
Other (please specify)		4

43. What is your highest educational qualification? **261**

O-Level, CSE, GCSE or school certificate (16 years)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
A-Level	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Tertiary education (diploma, BAg etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
(please specify giving subject specialism)		

44. Do you have any training in farm business management? **262**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	2

If yes, where were you trained (e.g. university, in house training)? **263**

If no, do you feel that this has disadvantaged your ability to implement and administer the agri-environmental schemes? **264**

45. Do you have any training in conservation issues?	265
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	1
No <input type="checkbox"/>	2
If yes, where were you trained (e.g. university, in house training)?	266
If no, do you feel that this has disadvantaged your ability to implement and administer the agri-environmental schemes?	267
46. Do you have any training in communication skills?	268
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	1
No <input type="checkbox"/>	2
If yes, where were you trained (e.g. university, in house training)?	269
If no, do you feel that this has disadvantaged your ability to implement and administer the agri-environmental schemes?	270
47. Do you currently live in that area covered by 'your' agri-environmental scheme?	271
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	1
No <input type="checkbox"/>	2
If yes, how long have you lived in this area?	272

48. Do you feel that this has had any impact on the way in which you implement the agri-environmental scheme? 273

Yes ☐ 1
 No ☐ 2

If yes, why? 274

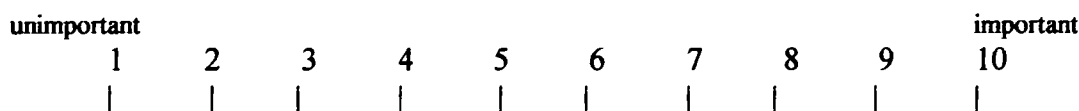
49. What percentage of your working time is spent at:
 (please answer for all)

The FRCA Office ☐ 275
 Home ☐ 276
 In the Field ☐ 277
 Other? (please specify) 278

50. Are you a member of any of the following countryside and conservation related organisations?
 (Please tick all those that are relevant)

RSPB ☐ 279
 National Trust ☐ 280
 Friends of the Earth ☐ 281
 Greenpeace ☐ 282
 Rambler's Association ☐ 283
 County Wildlife Groups ☐ 284
 CPRE ☐ 285
 Other (please specify) 286

51. How important is it, do you feel, that all farmers should implement environmental objectives in their agricultural decision-making?
 (Please circle one number on the scale) 287



52. Please tick the appropriate box:

Male ☐ ☐
Female ☐ ☐

288

1
2

<21 years of age ☐ ☐
21-30 years ☐ ☐
31-40 years ☐ ☐
41-50 years ☐ ☐
51-60 years ☐ ☐
>60 years ☐ ☐

289

1
2
3
4
5
6

Project Officer ☐ ☐
Assistant Project Officer ☐ ☐

290

1
2

53. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

